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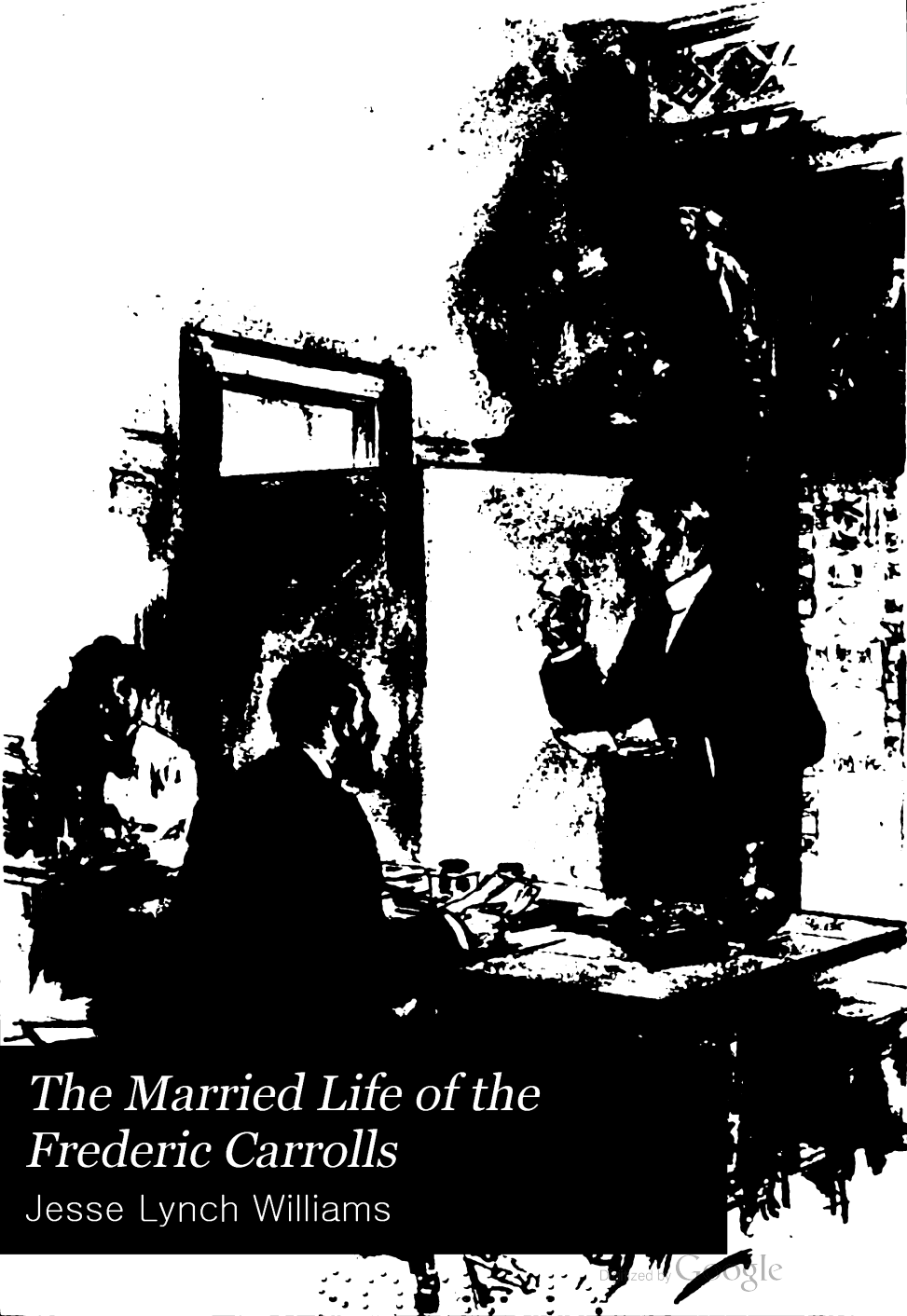

The Married Life of the Frederic Carrolls

Jesse Lynch Williams

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The Married Life of the Frederic Carrolls

By

JESSE LYNCH WILLIAMS

ILLUSTRATED

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

153-157 Fifth Avenue : : New York

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To

MY MOTHER

AN OLD-FASHIONED WOMAN WHO
UNDERSTANDS THE NEW

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Scenario

FIRST PART

THEIR "MERE MARRIAGE"

I. THE HONEYMOON 3

Scenes: A sixteenth-century Manor House and a nineteenth-century Imagination.

(With a romantic overture the curtain is rung up, and the idyllic first act is begun, against an ideal background. Enter, unannounced, an unbidden guest, called "The Gregarious Instinct"—a friend in the guise of a foe—much to the alarm of an orthodox pair of lovers, ill-prepared for such emergencies. The honeymoon, already too long, "ends happily.")

II. THE DINERS-OUT 32

Scenes: The Carrolls' Town House—a "quaint old-fashioned home," though on Manhattan Island; modern bachelor's apartments (with fascinating Bohemian atmosphere); the Opera; a Police Station.

(One of the comedies of gregariousness—with a cruel rebuke for the complacency of popular bachelors. Also a warning, which will not be heeded, against the complacency of the happily married.)

III. FREDERIC CARROLL, MONOGAMIST . . 81

Scenes: A modern woman's club (both suffrage and anti); an artist's studio; a wife's heart; her husband's; the other woman's, and so on, concluding with a tableau in the North Woods.

("The other Woman," who is not very "unpleasant"—brilliantly illuminates certain unforeseen obstacles in the pretty path of one anxious to be "Just an Old-Fashioned Wife," and yet compelled to live in new-fashioned conditions. Then we may watch the working out of an optimistic intention to make a real union out of a mere marriage.)

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SECOND PART

THE HOUSE OF CARROLL

IV. THE COMEDY OF HOME-BUILDING . . 221

Scenes: First, chiefly in the clouds of sweet illusion. Second, down to earth, also sweet, but solid.

(Several years have elapsed, and the Carrolls have become younger—at least they appear in a new light, as together they face the pressing problem of establishing a new home for new Carrolls. They are able to get some fun out of it.)

V. THE DREAM-HOUSE—AND THE NIGHTMARE 253

Scenes: On the Carroll Estate and on the Carroll nerves.

(A continuation of the above, and a concrete example of the insidious delights and dangers of building castles in the air—with its amusing reactions upon the Carrolls, who are foes of Compromise.)

VI. THE CARROLLS' HOUSE-WARMING . . 283

Scenes: Partly in the past, partly at "The Meadows" (proper name of a house called "The Carrolls'.")

(Showing how a home found itself, and suggesting how the Carrolls found themselves—an established unit in a conservative circle of the Nicest People.)

VII. THE FAMILY PARTY 309

Scenes: The same set and properties as in the last, but with an entirely different background. Victorian atmosphere. Any American household of "culture and refinement" would do as well.

(Others, members of one of our best families appear, explaining (by their silence) much that has gone before. Suddenly a family skeleton is disclosed, the clan spirit is aroused, and the House of Carroll now seems sound and secure.)

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SCENARIO (CONTINUED)

THIRD PART

THEIR SHARE OF THE WORLD

VIII. THEIR MILLIONAIRE TENANT . . . 383

Scenes: The Carrolls' celebrated country place and the Parkers' expensive boarding-house.

(The Acquisitive sense collides with the Æsthetic sense—to the amazement of both worthy civilizers. N.B.: The Carrolls formerly owned their home—now we see the home beginning to own the Carrolls.)

IX. THE CARROLLS' FORMAL GARDEN . . 433

Scenes: Fred's studio, Molly's mind, and the Carrolls' terrace.

(Mrs. Carroll threatens to become a New Woman, much to the perplexity of her loving and loved husband. The children and other conservative allies stand by him, and we need feel little concern over the net result.)

X. THE CARROLLS' FORTUNE 481

Scenes: First act, the House of Sterling and the House of Carroll. Second act: The House of Mammon, and the wicked but inspiring world.

(A logical conclusion to all that has preceded. By the simple aid of the "mistaken identity" trick (dear to dramatists) virtue is easily shown to triumph inevitably, and as the curtain is rung down, we all applaud and turn away to our own sweet homes.)

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FIRST PART

THEIR "MERE MARRIAGE"

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"And so they were married, and lived happily ever after."

I

THE HONEYMOON

SCENES: A sixteenth-century Manor House and a nineteenth-century Imagination.

(WITH A ROMANTIC OVERTURE THE CURTAIN IS RUNG UP, AND THE IDYLLIC FIRST ACT IS BEGUN, AGAINST AN IDEAL BACKGROUND. ENTER, UNANNOUNCED, AN UNBIDDEN GUEST, CALLED "THE GREGARIOUS INSTINCT"—A FRIEND IN THE GUISE OF A FOE—MUCH TO THE ALARM OF AN ORTHODOX PAIR OF LOVERS, ILL-PREPARED FOR SUCH EMERGENCIES. THE HONEYMOON, ALREADY TOO LONG, "ENDS HAPPILY.")

I

WHEN the wild rain-clouds were driven out to sea at last the happy pair had ventured forth from their secluded retreat, and, passing through "my lady's garden," had crossed the ancient Bowling Green and mounted Beacon Hill, where, hand-in-hand, they had gazed out across the sparkling downs as the sun sank behind the distant fringe of trees. Then, still in silence (but

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still together), they had returned to the ivy-mantled manor-house—all their own for days to come, with no fear of separation, no danger of interruption.

Here in the goodly Tudor hall, mellow with the tone of time, before the smoke-stained fireplace, guarded on either side by carved knights in armor, the lovers lingered as if reluctant to break the spell, gazing dreamily into the glowing embers, while outside the wind crooned caressingly about the mossy gables, and the rooks in the swaying fir-trees called to one another, their clamor—now faint, now clear—wafted by the wind.

He was seated in an immense oak chair of richly carved back, and she on a low stool at his feet, her fair head resting against his knee while he ran his fingers idly through her light-brown hair. He was smoking his pipe, for which she had held the match, as was her pretty custom. A bit of unfinished embroidery lay unnoticed at her side. It was all just as they had pictured it in the long ago, a dream come true. . . .

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Presently Frederic Carroll, for he it was, might have been seen quietly removing his pipe with one hand while quickly covering his mouth with the other. His jaws opened wide with a spasmodic movement, irresistible, pitiless; then, after the climax, closed again, softly; this being followed by a rapid blinking of the eyelids, as though tears were there.

Then, suddenly realizing the significance of what he had unwittingly done, Frederic Carroll scowled troubledly and, all unseen by her, he shook his handsome head. But he said nothing. Outwardly all was beautiful, and his silence seemed the sweet silence of perfect comradeship, broken only by the whisper of the wind and the low moan of the distant sea.

II

Shall we penetrate the disturbing secrets behind that troubled brow and see just what was the matter?

When the beautiful dream was first attained it had all seemed too good to be real,

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but now with nothing else to think about, nothing else for a usually busy man to do all day, it was fast becoming too real to be good. There were to be four more weeks of this before he could get back to his work —which he also loved—and he was wondering how he could keep up the pace.

True, this was precisely what he had worked for, lived for, longed for. He had won what he wanted, and now would he stop wanting what he had won? It was miserably unfair to the charming creature at his feet, but *he* couldn't help it. He was doing his best to keep on loving her; yet already there had come times when he did not thrill at hearing her light staccato step approaching along the passage. Even now he could look down upon her there in the soft light of the afterglow without feeling "an irresistible impulse" to take her in his arms. If it were as bad as this in two months what would it be in a year—in a lifetime of fireside companionship? He shut his eyes as if afraid to face the appalling picture. She was so young and so fair, and he was so bored.

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He wondered how *she* could keep on liking it. But that, it seemed, was the nature of woman. Had not the poets, the true lover's only Baedeker, declared that love was of man's life a thing apart, but of woman's life the whole business? *She* did not seem to mind seeing no one but him; she *liked* being shut in by the rain. The home was woman's sphere. She had become habituated to it by centuries of training—the only really domesticated animal.

Presently Molly, for it was no other, looked up at her husband and smiled. "Fred," she asked drolly, "are you still happy in your 'new life' in your 'little home'?"

He chuckled fondly, as she knew he would, for he always did when she burlesqued Aunt Bella's sentimental phrases, especially as their little home was considerably larger than any they ever expected to occupy again—at least, until their new life was considerably older. It was an historic estate, founded centuries before, added to and subtracted from in various succeeding centuries of war or affluence and now in-

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trusted for a short term to these young Americans at what seemed a ridiculously low rental. They had seen the advertisement of it in *Country Life*, had fallen in love with the pictures, and had snapped it up, poor innocents, without understanding, being Americans, certain quaint old English customs which made the rent but one small factor in the expense of leasing quaint old English places.

Frederic Carroll, "the promising young portrait painter," had received a commission for some illustrations of certain historic scenes in this interesting part of England for one of the magazines at home. At his bachelor dinner, which seemed years ago, he had boasted laughingly of his parsimony. "Not every bridegroom can make his honeymoon pay!" he had said, with a humorous swagger.

To be sure, the illustrations were only a month's work, but with Molly at his side, with the inspiration of love—not to speak of the spur of necessity—he had counted upon bringing home enough landscapes

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from this charming, Constablesque country, unappreciated by most painters, to warrant the extra expense. But he had not counted upon its raining every day for a month.

However, both of them had read and dreamed for years of just such a place as this (you see how congenial they had thought they were), and as neither expected ever to have another honeymoon (they had laughingly agreed upon this matter too) they meant to make the most of it. Well, they were doing so.

But three months meant three moons, and there are other foods than honey. Men, especially those who smoke, are not so fond of sweets as women are. It seems that there are also other worthy instincts in life besides the mating instinct, though that may be the prettiest and most potent. For instance, there is the instinct for work, and there is the gregarious instinct. Even to the best of mated couples in the most "ideal" surroundings—with entrancing walled gardens and avenues of firs, with copses, swales, downs; moors, fens, and

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even a haunted chamber—the low insistent call of the tribe will sometimes penetrate.

In those first idyllic days, when it all seemed too wonderful to be believed, when transported by the glory of loving something better than one's self—the period upon which poets are inclined to dwell to the exclusion of what follows—they were both perfectly convinced that never again should they want any one in their cosmos but each other. In fact, a universe alone would have suited them very well, or a delightful desert island; at the very least, a privately owned wilderness. But as that was not altogether practicable they had rented a wilderness, this very charming one, in a remote corner of the world, far from home and free from friends, where they had no more to do with their English neighbors, who were inclined to be kind, than courtesy demanded.

But, alas! even with the one woman in the world the wilderness was not paradise enow for Frederic Carroll. For that matter, it had not proved to be enough even in the

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case of Adam and the one woman then in the world, though theirs was a real paradise, and Adam, it will be recalled, had not acquired the unfortunate habit of earning his own loaf and jug of wine—another respect in which he had the advantage over his young descendant, Fred; if it was an advantage. And yet, like many a misled lover before him, here was a bridegroom who felt himself horribly lacking in the prime essentials of an orthodox husband, because he was rapidly becoming bored to death at being cooped up through a long, rainy season in a fascinating old manor-house with the only girl he had ever really loved.

Now that his dream was demolished, would the old haunting nightmare come true? For, previous to meeting the one woman in the world, though he had adored other women in the world for days at a time—even weeks—he had always feared ("something told him") that if ever he learned to love any of them enough to marry them he would afterward learn to hate them enough to wish he hadn't. This

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seemed such an ungrateful way to treat some sweet, unsuspecting girl who would trust him and give him "her all" that he had often felt quite sorry for the poor thing and wondered what she looked like and whether she would prefer to call him "dearest," or merely "Fred."

Thus it was that, being a calm, unimpulsive fellow, he had remained a lonely old bachelor until the mellow age of twenty-five. Then the great miracle happened. He met Molly. One look into her frank, amused eyes, and straightway he forgot everything else, including his previously interesting self. Her he would love so long as he had breath in his body, though, being a calm, unimpulsive fellow, he had not told her so until the third time he had looked into them.

She had merely laughed at him and said she did not believe a word of it, which only made him the more convinced that they had been meant for each other from the dawn of time. It was not so easy, however, to convince *her* of this, for she, too, was

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something of a painter and seemed more interested in her career for the time being. But when at last the golden moment came when he held her in his arms in man-fashion she too felt sure that they were meant for each other from the beginning, and that therefore they would have to be together to the end. She did not laugh at him now. She wept a little.

That was the only reason they had condescended to be married. For neither of these modern young persons, it seems, had cherished a very high regard for this well-meaning institution of matrimony, though their ancestors had been addicted to it, it could not be denied (nor did they try to deny it), as far back as the records ran, which was quite far back, as such things run, on both sides.

Well, it is only in certain low forms of animal life and fiction that this consummation is followed by death or "THE END." They did not die. This was not the end. It was only the beginning. That was love. This was marriage—civilization's attempt

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to compromise with nature, which smilingly refuses to take civilization so seriously as we do. Marriage follows love, sometimes; love would follow marriage more often if its neophytes weren't so misguided by those who tell about it—or discreetly decline to do so.

Never having been married before, young Frederic wanted to do the right thing in the right way. He wanted to make more of a success of marriage than of anything he had ever undertaken. And yet, by clinging to the most approved ideals, according to the best social and literary traditions, he had made the disconcerting discovery that even the most perfect thing was imperfect. Or, that he was. Or else (perish the thought) that she was!

In after years, if their wedding should become a marriage (unless in the meanwhile it divorced them) they might possibly be able to stand seeing so much of each other. They might even enjoy it. Such things have been known to happen. But why should they have been led to expect it now?

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A mere boy and girl, carefully trained to be uncongenial, utterly unacquainted, but thinking they knew each other well because they had wanted each other much. Did they propose to keep on sighing and dying for blisses and kisses? Even poets, as a matter of fact and prose, have been known to get over it—that over-worked affair of the Brownings to the contrary notwithstanding. For with the best intentions, it is difficult to keep on longing for what one already has.

And yet a few well-developed longings seem necessary for human progress. Surely we prefer to see all living beings make progress, even though married—unless they belong to those lower forms of life. Indeed, it is all the more important to do so when one has a wife to protect and cherish. . . . Fred, who had acquired the commendable habit of working hard in the world of men, was longing ardently to get back to work, was sighing hungrily for the fellowship of men, who also worked—and talked his own language.

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III

The wind had left off crooning and was now beginning to howl dismally about the mossy gables of their paradise.

"I am afraid the roses along the wall will be bruised," said Molly, the tender hearted. She was so domestic. He believed in having them domestic.

"Poor little roses," he replied, sympathetically. She, he thought, was like a rose, a delicate hot-house rose, transplanted from a kind father's home, a tender mother's protection, out into the cold world, and now at the mercy of a strange man. Must she too be bruised and buffeted by the storms of life? No! not while he had a strong arm to defend her, a tongue to lie to her. *His* dream was shattered but *hers* should remain.

Suddenly, as if reading his thoughts, his wife turned and confronted him. "Why are you so silent?"

"Silent?" he echoed, a little startled. "Why, I was just thinking," he added en-

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thusiastically—"I was just thinking how quiet and nice it was here now that the Winstons are gone and we can have each other all to ourselves again!" He believed that he ought to be glad that his guests were gone, so he tried to persuade himself by saying it often. Mental healers work wonders in that way.

The Winstons, while motoring though the country, had discovered the Carrolls, had made a week's visit, and had made poor Fred realize what a shamefully over-developed gregarious instinct he had. It amounted almost to a passion. He caught himself looking back with a sort of sentimental yearning upon that all too brief visit, now over and done for. The fun the four of them had together, the gayety at dinner, the quick talk and laughter! Even breakfast had been objective and enjoyable. And then that blessed car of the Winstons! The good fresh air, the frolicsome fun, the runs to unknown far-away towns, with glimpses of the glad outside world, now so remote and unattainable.

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"I believe you miss them horribly!" said his wife teasingly, yet with a wistful little look in her soft eyes. "Do you, Fred?"

Women are so queer about some things; they must be assured and reassured. "Miss them!" He leaned forward and kissed her white brow. That was the answer a woman likes. He had read it in a book. "I need exercise, that's all. I'm used to taking a good deal."

She patted his hand after the fond manner of women. "Good old Fred," she whispered. "To-morrow we'll take a long walk whether it rains or not."

Outwardly he beamed, but inwardly he writhed. Before his marriage he had been an honest, fearless young man, but now, it seemed, he would have to be a liar all the rest of his life—a liar to the one he wanted most to be honest with. What a life! What a travesty on that beautiful dream of perfect understanding and mutual sympathy!

But what a noble hero he was (if he had only known it) to sacrifice himself, and

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even truth, for the sake of the woman he loved! No, it was even more heroic than that; it was for the sake of the woman he no longer loved. Any man, even a blackguard, can perform noble deeds for the woman he adores, but to sacrifice himself for the sake of a woman who bores him! It takes a true nobleman to reach such heights. It is quite likely that Fred Carroll, plain American, was nobler far than any of the Christian knights who had sat before that ancient fireplace in the gallant days of old—getting drunk—but he wasn't thinking about that. He was thinking about the Winstons.

He wondered why he missed them so; in his bachelor days they had never appealed to him especially. But it had seemed good to have a man about again, some one to slap on the back, some one to smoke and drink and sit up late with, talking shop and gossip by the fireside after the girls had gone to bed; and good to see a man on the other side of the tennis net, instead of the woman who was meant for him from the

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beginning of time (and the end thereof), some one to whom it was not necessary to serve easily, for whose sake he need not cheat himself in the score; some one with whom it was fun to compete.

But that was only natural and manlike. The chagrinning recollection, the unmanly truth, was that he had been able, willing —nay, glad—though married so short a time, to tear himself away from his fair bride and go with Tom on a long tramp over the hills for two whole days! He knew men—long-married men—who boasted of never having been separated from their loving wives for twenty-four hours. He had rather expected to be that sort himself. . . He suspected now why they boasted about it. Marriage was an endurance contest.

Such an agreeable change had it been, indeed, to get away from his beloved helpmeet and have at last not a dainty feminine stroll (hand-in-hand) but a real walk, twenty-five good sweating miles a day with a companion who was not liable to damp

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skirts or draughts or fatigue—such a joyous relief that this unromantic bridegroom ran and jumped and frisked about like a half-broken colt released at last from the chafing double harness. He sang, he swore, he even—ah, me!—he even spat upon the neat English highways. Such was the transforming influence of holy matrimony upon an imperfectly domesticated animal named Fred.

"I ran across Fred Carroll," Tom wrote to a mutual friend, "with his pretty bride in his grand old place by the sea. She is a good sort—just the girl for him. My wife is crazy about her. But Fred is too much married. I had great difficulty in coaxing him away, but I finally persuaded him to leave the girls at home for a couple of days and we took a walking trip—at a frightful pace. He is so happily married that he only touched the high places—would have done forty miles the first day if I hadn't held him in. But one thing struck me as odd. You know he never used to drink much in the old days, but that night at

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dinner at an old inn he almost put your humble servant under the table!"

Life had taken on a new meaning for Frederic Carroll.

IV

Once more the long silence of perfect comradeship was broken by Molly. "Dearest, if we hadn't this expensive place on our hands shouldn't you like to go back to 'the States'?"

He was startled. Was she reading his mind? But he recovered himself quickly. "What! leave this paradise? Should *you* like it?" He could hardly hope that she would say yes.

"I was thinking of you, dear," she said sweetly. (A true woman.)

"Of me!" Again he gave her the orthodox answer (on her fair cheek this time). She was always thinking of him, God bless her! One is supposed to love them for that. But somehow it was like the chocolate cake she had surprised him with at his birthday dinner. It was awfully dear of her, but, as

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it happened, he did not care for chocolate cake. (What should one do in such a case? Fred, being noble, ate three pieces beamingly—and then had indigestion.)

"How about your work?" she asked innocently. "If this weather continues, what will you have for that exhibition Tom was talking about?" Clearly something had aroused her suspicions. Or was it his guilty conscience?

He made answer without flinching. "Honeymoons come but once in a lifetime," he said, and "Thank Heaven!" he added under his breath.

Suddenly she turned and searched his eyes with a look that made him tingle with dread. "Fred," she asked, without any twinkling drollery, without any fond smile—"Fred, do you really enjoy being cooped up here in this lonely place with me?" (No doubt of it now! Something had told her—probably her intuitions; their intuitions are wonderful.) "No, Fred, never mind *kissing* me; I want the truth. You know we promised always to be honest

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with each other. Remember, there are to be four more weeks of this, and John, the gardener, says they are more than likely to be rainy. Do you really think you can stand it? Answer me truly, dear!"

It was the supreme moment of their life together. Her happiness hung in the balance, hung on him. Though in a dreadful panic he arose to the occasion and perjured himself like a gentleman.

"Stand it! Why, Molly, isn't it the dream of my life? The thing I lived for, worked for, all these years?" He looked down upon her with a tender pity for the poor, deceived creature. He leaned forward to take the dear, trustful little thing in his strong, protecting arms, and apply more adjectives to her.

But with a shudder she sprang out of his reach. "Then all I have to say," she burst out impetuously, "is that you married the wrong girl and I married the wrong man! *You* may be able to stand it, but I can't, and I won't! To you it may be a dream, but to me it's a nightmare. No, don't stop me

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now. You may as well know the worst. I suppose it will break your heart; it has almost broken mine. I have been fighting and fighting against it, but I have realized it every day since the Winstons left: *I am bored to death!*" And she gazed defiantly into his startled eyes.

Oh, how he loved her for those words! But for the moment he was too astonished to say so, even if she had not gone on without pause, seeming to find "a fierce delight" in rudely awakening him from his dream, in exposing herself in all her shameless wickedness. The words rushed out like water through a broken dam:

"I am tired of hanging about this dreary, draughty old ruin. I like you more than anybody in the world, but I am tired of seeing so much of you. I am tired of sitting on this hard stool looking sentimentally into the fire. I want to see some one else once in a while. I want to see my girl friends. I want them to see my pretty clothes. *They* would appreciate them. I want to go home. I want to live like other married girls, in an apartment, if necessary,

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even a horrid, cramped, vulgar little bit of a one, if it only has a big porcelain bath and *plenty of hot water.* I could even stand steam heat—I haven't been warm since we came here. I want a home of my own, something to *do.* I'm not used to idleness. I'm not domestic either, if you must know it. But if I can't paint I *must* do *something.* There's nothing here to do all day long except put flowers in vases and look sweet and hear how much you love me. I have heard that already; I can take it for granted now. I want something else. I hate sewing, I hate embroidery. I only *pretended* to like it, to please *you.* These supercilious servants won't let me do anything else, except order the meals and ring for tea, tea, tea! If I so much as touched a dust-cloth Mary would give notice. If I raised the window to air my own bedroom Susan would remind me with her eyebrows that Lady Harriet didn't do that. I want to go home—I want to go home!"

There was a pause. In fact, a ghastly silence.

Her husband was in a daze, trying to

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adjust himself to this topsy-turvy world. "I—I am surprised," he stammered, and indeed he was.

"I knew you would be," she said, weeping now and hiding her face, "but the truth had to come out some time. Think what it means to me! I know I am spoiling your life. You are so noble, so kind, so good—but I am falling out of love with you every minute. Fred, I always *told* you I didn't deserve this great bl-*blessing!*" and then she broke down and sobbed.

He looked at her a moment in silence, then said: "And I thought—all this time I *thought* that I was making you completely happy!"

"That is just the trouble," she went on, between sobs of shame; "you are always making me so happy, so uncomfortably comfortable. You are always stuffing sofa-cushions behind my back; but when you leave me I throw the hateful things across the room. I don't love you as you deserve to be loved, and I can't. I'm not going to pretend any longer. It's unfair to you, and it's *killing* me. I'd rather separate.

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I'd rather go back to my father's home before it is too late to correct this ghastly mistake. I always said I hated marriage. Well, I'm beginning to hate my own marriage. I hate myself, I hate *you!*"

He had not supposed it was quite as ghastly as all that, and, being a fatuous male man, he began to feel genuinely alarmed. "Do you mean that I am not the right one, after all?"

"I don't see how you *can* be! If you were I should *enjoy* all this—just as you do, poor dear."

She, too, had her heavy handicap of "ideals."

"Molly!" he cried, seeing a ray of hope and taking a bold step toward her, "I *am* the right man, we *are* well mated, and I'll prove it." He paused and, drawing himself to his full, proud height, added triumphantly, "*I, too, am bored to death!*" and then he burst out laughing.

In dumb amazement she gazed at him with ever-widening eyes, while he plunged on recklessly, and into his voice there came the clear, exultant note of a soul set free:

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"I am so bored that I can't think, can't work, can't see straight; so bored that *I don't even enjoy my meals!* Now you know why I've been so silent, so depressed. You may think *you* are bored—but oh, Molly, if you only knew how *I* feel!"

She hesitated no longer, but rushed toward him wildly. "Fred!" she cried, also laughing, "how congenial, how *perfectly* congenial we are!" It does not take women so long to adjust themselves. (Intuition, perhaps).

He gathered her eagerly into his capable arms. "Molly," he whispered, holding her close, "let us give up these confounded ideal surroundings; let us go home and begin life anew!"

There was a moment's interval while they began life anew, without even waiting to go home.

"And do you really mean," she sighed happily, "that you are sick of mooning before this awful fireplace?" It seemed too good to be true.

"Sick to death of it!" he muttered pas-

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sionately as he drew her to him again; "your head against my knee always used to put my leg to sleep."

"Oh, you *darling!*" she cried ecstatically, "it always gave me the dreadfullest crick in my neck."

They laughed and laughed, gazing at each other with new interest, so fascinated that they scarcely seemed aware of the entrance of the austere English servant bearing tea.

"And you were actually growing tired of kissing me?" she asked adorably.

"I was!" he answered, kissing her ardently.

"So was I!" she echoed, kissing him contentedly.

Then, full of "a strange peace," they took their places before the congenial fireplace, while the wind howled romantically about the mossy gables of the charming old manor-house.

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V

"It all goes to show," said Fred, as side by side they sailed back for their own country, their own tribe, their own work in the world, "it all goes to show that we were meant for each other from the beginning. Doesn't it, dearest?"

"Well, at any rate," said Molly, smiling up into his face, "we are meant for each other to the end. So we'd better tell the truth along the way."

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II

THE DINERS-OUT

SCENES: The Carrolls' Town House — a "quaint old-fashioned home," though on Manhattan Island; modern bachelor's apartments (with fascinating Bohemian atmosphere); the Opera; a Police Station.

(ONE OF THE COMEDIES OF GREGARIOUSNESS—WITH A A CRUEL REBUKE FOR THE COMPLACENCY OF POPULAR BACHELORS. ALSO A WARNING, WHICH WILL NOT BE HEEDED, AGAINST THE COMPLACENCY OF THE HAPPILY MARRIED.)

I

It is to be feared that early in her hazardous career as a wife Molly Carroll failed to appreciate all of her husband's dear old friends. We refer at present to some not of her own sex. This seems strange, too, since each one of them, according to no less an authority than Frederic Carroll, whose judgment she still respected, happened to be the best fellow in the world.

But there seemed to be such an alarming number of best fellows in the world. New ones were constantly turning up for dinner,

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whose names, even, Fred had never mentioned, painters and architects of the Paris period of her husband's past, or mere social acquaintances of his brilliant bachelor days in New York (meaning not the only true, "Literary and Artistic" elect), or old friends of the Carroll family who knew and apparently cared more about the gossip and family connections of that illustrious clan than Molly did, and seemed to enjoy displaying that fact.

Fred, who was passionately gregarious, loved them all. Despite his Great Happiness he enjoyed having them about—perhaps because of his Great Happiness he was no longer so scornful and fastidious as when a mere looker on, "an amateur of life." He was now, it seems, a part of the great scheme of things. Love had aroused the godlike quality of man, and he pronounced it all very good. He had had a revelation. There was no longer any distinction of clean and unclean. This may account for his broad-minded approval of brokers, merchants, and others not of the only true elect.

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The worst of it was that since these two were now one, his wife was also expected to love all these dear old friends, even the strange, uncouth ones, diamonds in the rough which would never become smooth. She was expected to achieve enthusiasm over them at once, while they waited, as it were; though it was sometimes difficult to give the illusion, especially while they waited for dinner, if Fred had not telephoned that he was bringing them. (He learned better after he became thoroughly broken.) Leading in a grinning, embarrassed best fellow in the world, "Molly," he would quietly announce, as if wanting, under the characteristic Carroll reserve, to say "I have a great surprise for you"—and sure enough he had—"Molly, this is *Sammy!*"

And then he would beam with quiet satisfaction from one to the other, rejoicing that these two human beings were now to have the inestimable privilege of knowing each other at last, while she would do her best to beam too, wondering meanwhile what Sammy's last name might be (the

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Carrolls were too reserved), and whether the steak was big enough for three; and Sammy would beam most of all, wondering, in turn, what Fred saw in this slip of a brown-eyed girl to make such a fuss over. For since his marriage Fred had worn a sanctified look, as of one set apart, and shunned the club, except on rare occasions; and then seemed quite benign and deep—no longer cynical and facetious, like the unmarried cubs, who did not understand life's full meaning.

In so many cases, it seemed to her, Fred and his dear old friend no longer found each other so very delightful, having so little in common, except the past—rapidly becoming smaller and less significant with the perspective of time, but still roseate and precious. However, if they were no longer particularly congenial they steadfastly refused to admit it, and laughed immoderately at each other's jokes, asking, in pauses, eager, unintelligent questions about each other's jobs, in which more than likely they weren't at all interested, though they pretended to be.

It was very amusing and rather pathetic

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to Molly looking on. Friendship seemed to be more important to men than to women, though she would never admit it to Fred. She sometimes thought that men were really the more sentimental sex, and that women were merely said to be, because men preferred to think so, and because emotion, which is not the same as sentiment, was so much more important to woman, it being her chief stock in the only trade man, as yet, thoroughly approves for woman, though, of course, men didn't call it a trade. They were too chivalric—too sentimental.

The attitude of Fred's friends toward her, now that she was a wife, was also amusing, at times irritating. For she had not yet learned her place. Some of them regarded her with a deeply, but respectfully distant, air of devotion. Others looked at Fred with quizzical pity, though she was not supposed to see it, and upon her as a nuisance, until they became really acquainted. Then they told her for hours and hours about their love affairs—assuming that she was interested and sympathetic,

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and so she was, though sometimes rather sleepy—until they got wives of their own, and then came, with the wives, an entirely new set of complications.

Others, who had had unfortunate affairs, seemed full of earnest sentimental approbation, as if constantly saying "Dear old Fred—lucky dog." And still others who had the reputation of being popular with women were effusively gallant, as if they were gay old blades saying "The Ladies—God bless 'em," every few minutes.

Nearly all of these various friends, however, seemed sane and comfortable enough while talking to Fred, but the moment she appeared the atmosphere changed like their facial expressions and they began to execute curious mental and physical gyrations of pyrotechnical politeness, exploding occasionally with a complicated compliment. They didn't enjoy it much more than did she or Fred (who looked vaguely delighted), but they seemed to think that this was the way to perform before the ladies, God bless 'em, and she being a member of the

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only truly chivalric sex pretended to like it, as became a dutiful wife and perfect hostess, just as she pretended to be worsted in argument sometimes when she wasn't, in order to spare their masculine pride—as became the weaker sex.

She was beginning to see now why it was that so many men in America shunned the society of women unless in love with them. Women were a thing apart from real life, and there was only one way to talk to them, only one use for them. In France, where she spent much of her girlhood, when a woman married she had her fling, her chance—not merely at lovers, as so many good Americans thought who had read certain kinds of French fiction—but at talk, at conversation, at banter, give and take, playing with other ideas than sex ideas.

But most men at home seemed to think that women, young women, pretty women, shouldn't have ideas at all, and as most of them had none themselves, except about business and sport, there was no real conversation except with those who could talk

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about *Fred's* business. It seemed permissible for women to have opinions about that, because art was a mere luxury and had nothing to do with real life, so most of them thought. Women were supposed to be a mere decoration, as in other semi-barbaric stages of civilization, an expensive luxury which has become a necessity, or a habit, like tobacco; used by some as a sedative, by others as a stimulant. And as she happened to be Fred's costly decoration most of them seemed to think that they ought to let her alone now, except to admire her and appraise her worth. It is always rather astonishing to young women who have numerous men friends to find, upon marriage, how many of them were potential lovers. . . .

She told Fred that she wasn't quite sure whether she was a sedative or a stimulant. But Fred said she was a darling, and as his friends continued to treat her as "a cunning little thing," in these early days of learning her place Molly mentally retired, except when a chosen few came to the house, and

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looked on at the comedy of friendship with amused, detached interest. Sometimes she retired physically. Judging from the unstrained note in their voices as soon as she left the room, many of them enjoyed her absence better than her presence.

II

Irving Lawton and Horace Beck, the two men Molly was inviting to meet her country cousins at dinner, were dashing young bachelors in great demand. One was long and thin, and made dry, humorous observations. The other was short and cherubic and laughed at them. So they were handy to have about, both in town and country houses.

Irving and Horace liked being of use to their friends. They were the sort of gay and smiling bachelors, chiefly infesting our cities, who believe it more blessed to give than to receive, and seem ever willing to let their married friends have all the blessings, thus disproving the charge of selfishness in bachelors. Hospitality is too sacred a

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thing to regard as a mere matter of barter and exchange, of give and take for value received. Irving and Horace were above any such sordid view. Well, since plenty of their married friends were, too, these sprightly young bachelors fared sumptuously. They dined out so often that they saved money enough on meals to pay the dues at more clubs than certain of their married hosts could afford. They had no stable of their own, but they rode thoroughbreds at week-end parties, supplying their own riding breeches. They possessed no automobiles, but they often drove their friends' cars, talking the language fluently. They owned no yachts, but on the annual cruise of the New York Yacht Club there they were, cutting capers upon the deck. They had no wives, but enjoyed the society of other men's, sometimes proving more amusing companions than knit-browed husbands who worked more or less hard to pay for all this. In short, Irving and Horace lapped the cream of life without doing any of the milking, and yet some people wonder why bachelors don't marry.

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"Marry!" as Irving said one day to the delectable and important Mrs. H. Harrison Wells. "My dear lady, my income wouldn't pay for your shoes. I can't think of marriage." Perhaps this was an understatement of Irving's income, for Irving was "doing well" for so young a man; but he was one of those who think that all of the very wealthy enjoy flattering references to their wealth. Mrs. Wells did not think much about wealth, not having earned it. She never displayed it consciously. But she thought a good deal about her pretty feet, and always displayed them. So Irving's flattering reference scored after all.

Then Horace, the fat, comfortable one, added broad-mindedly as he lit one of Harry Wells's famous cigars: "There is nothing I'd like better than to have a charming wife like you, and a spacious country-seat like this, and keep it well filled with guests—like us. But when you are poor, what is a fellow to do?" And he chuckled, blowing smoke in complete comfort.

Some men mope and moan about it and feel sorry for themselves. That is foolish.

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The right thing to do is to play the man, bear up, and make the best of it, like Horace and Irving. Time and again the Burgundy was not warm enough, but they never uttered a word of complaint, draining several glasses in tactful silence. If their host failed to send the car down to the station to meet them they philosophically hired a public conveyance, no matter how badly it smelled, and drove up smiling. When the girls the hostess had invited to amuse them were not bright nor good-looking they did not avoid them pointedly, as some men do, but graciously talked to them now and then, and quite forgave their hostess—if she wouldn't do it again.

Irving, the tall one, was quite distinguished looking and had a mustache that turned up at the corners. This went well with his way of saying "Aw, aw," when he began his humorous observations, in a voice that went high up in the scale and slid down again delightfully. The ladies told him he looked and talked exactly like an English Guardsman. He came from Martinsville, Ohio.

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Horace was of an old New York family—the Becks. Strangely enough, he was not so aristocratic in appearance, manner, or tastes as his room-mate; but when your great-grandfather has smoked a pipe on the stoop of his shop in Wall Street every evening for years and years, in his shirt-sleeves, you are not obliged to show how high bred you are—it goes without saying. Sometimes, to be sure, Horace tried to bow and talk like Irving, but it didn't seem to go with his face and figure. Besides, Irving did not like it.

Irving was a literary man. Horace was literary, too—that is, he had a job in a publisher's office; but he was literary all the same. He wrote the advertisements of Irving's stories, showing how trenchant, gripping, and full of red corpuscles they were. It is much harder to advertise books than to write them. Ask any publisher.

Irving wrote lovely stories. They were about perfectly beautiful New York girls, who invariably lived on the most expensive part of the Avenue and always kept brough-

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ams or limousines waiting outside, whether mother or any of the other girls might want to use them or not. But then, to be sure, each member of the family had at least one apiece. The men in Irving's stories were fine fellows, too. They always had clean limbs—"well-groomed, clean-limbed American manhood." They also had silk socks to put upon the limbs, and valets to keep the limbs clean. All of which helped them to do noble deeds for the beautiful girls in that quiet, off-hand manner so characteristic of our distinguished American aristocracy of wealth. These stories, which would give the aristocracy quite an uplift if they had only read them, made not a little stir out in Martinsville, where every one read them.

Irving made something of a stir himself when he went back home on holidays. The boys hadn't yet learned to wear their mustaches that way in Martinsville. Perhaps they were jealous. The girls, too, smiled a little behind Irving's back and wondered how long it had taken him to learn to talk that way; he did not do it when

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he used to go buggy-riding with them a few years before; but they flocked about him, all the same, and smiled very differently to his face. Women are so much kinder than men.

It was two of these very girls that Molly Carroll had invited the popular pair to meet at dinner on the eighth. She thought it would be nice for them to see one another and talk over old times. Besides, the bachelors had once been old, if not intimate, friends of Fred's.

The young Carrolls, it must be confessed, were not much like the people in Irving's stories. They were more like the people who bought them. They did not live on the fashionable part of the Avenue, or on the Avenue at all. There were no expensive vehicles waiting before the door, not even baby-carriages—as yet—which are expensive enough for the majority of those uplifted by Irving's stories. And yet, though not rich nor fashionable, they were "nice" and came of "good people" on both sides.

They seemed to have no social ambitions. Such things are known to happen, even in

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New York. They enjoyed meeting their friends, but that was because it meant a pleasant time, not because it would get them somewhere. They even enjoyed visits from their country cousins. Some of the nicest New Yorkers have country cousins, it is said. Molly was very fond of hers, and even of some of Fred's.

They loved Molly, too, though they were rather perplexed by her choice of a "little home" when they came to see her in her "new life." Instead of choosing a flat in a fashionable apartment-house more or less near the Avenue, with an imposing entrance downstairs containing appropriately dressed diplomats and other expensive furniture, the Carrolls had taken a house, a small stone house, away up near the end of Manhattan Island, miles away from everybody. It was what is called a "quaint old house," and went well with their doggedly Colonial wedding-present furniture. It had a grass-plot in front and a small garden in the rear—luxuries not common in New York. Molly loved it and raised violets. "Those

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who don't care enough for us to come this far to see us needn't come," said Molly, picking violets.

Now, though Fred felt sorry for such of his old friends as were not married, he tried not to show it when on those (as yet) rare occasions he dropped in at the club looking sanctified. Nevertheless, he could not help feeling proud of his pretty wife and of his achievement in winning and keeping her, though he tactfully avoided all reference to such matters in the presence of poor old bachelors like Irving and Horace, just as, in former times, when he became popular and successful he had not let it make "the slightest difference." To tell the truth, he had never cared much for the Irving and Horace type, but they had cared for him in the old dreary days of his early success—at least, they had flattered him and sought him out—and he did not propose to slight them now merely because he had attained Great Happiness. He took for granted that his society was even more desirable now, with the added attraction of the one woman in

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the world. Of recent years he had not seen much of this pair. He was aware that they had become social butterflies, but he did not criticise them for that. It was perfectly natural for those who have not yet attained the real things of life to console themselves, meanwhile, with artificial things. He had once been a bachelor himself. He had strolled through Vanity Fair and come out upon the other side, mellow and benevolent.

The premature unworldliness of the happily married is a dreadful handicap to true success.

III

"But I tell you we've got to go up there some time!" said Horace to Irving, who seemed annoyed at Molly's invitation, though she meant no harm by it.

"We've always got out of it before," said Irving.

"But we owe it to poor old Fred! He needs us; he needs stirring up."

Now, if Horace had been selfish, as bachelors too often are represented to be, he

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would not have let friendship stand in the way of his own comfort, not even when an old friend is too much married and needs stirring up. They are much misunderstood.

"Fred's a dear old dub," Irving admitted, "and his wife seems to be a nice little thing, though she doesn't interest me; but it's such an awful distance to go for dinner!" There are limits to the sacrifices one can make, even in friendship. "They show poor head in burying themselves away up there in the wilds. I can't imagine *why* they did it."

"How about those girls from Martinsville, 'O.'?" asked Horace Beck, of the Beck family, smiling. "Don't *they* interest you?"

"They are good-looking girls," answered Irving loyally; "you'd be surprised to see how smart they are—they've lived abroad and all that—but I haven't seen anything of them for years and years ['yahs and yahs']. I scarcely know them now," he added, twisting up his mustache. "Be-

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sides, they'll want to talk literature to me, and you know how I hate intellectual women." It was a perfectly natural distaste. When you have been making literature all day you want to get away from it at nightfall, just as the poor, tired business man, when he goes to the theatre, prefers chorus girls to mere muck-raking or problem plays.

Now, some people, when they receive an invitation they do not care to accept, simply decline it forthwith, saying: "Another engagement." Irving and Horace were more honest. They always waited for the other engagement first. Or, if no more attractive invitation turned up, they accepted, with apologies for their unavoidable delay.

This time, although they patiently waited five days, nothing had turned up except a subscription dance (tickets five dollars) and a charity concert (admission, three dollars, programmes extra), and these causes did not interest them. Honest poverty is no disgrace. Charity should begin at home.

"Why don't they answer!" Molly was saying. "But it's just like bachelors," she

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went on; "they never think of any one's comfort or convenience but their own. Do you realize that we have invited those 'dear old friends' of yours to dine with us three times? and they've never so much as asked me to their rooms for tea, as other bachelors do. I don't believe they've even had you at the club as their guest, though others do that, too."

Loyal Fred considered this unworthy of his wife. "You know perfectly well," he said, looking hurt, "that they cannot *afford* to entertain." It was true. There were many drains upon Irving's royalties, Horace's salary—clothes, club dues, taxis, the apartment-house valet, luncheons at Sherry's, flowers for Mrs. Wells, and the outrageous amount one was compelled to give up in tips every time one went to Aiken or the Adirondacks, or even on a friend's private car. Servants are such parasites.

"Dear me!" laughed Molly. "I don't expect them to *return* my invitations, merely to *accept* them—or, if they don't care to do that, to decline them, so I can fill their

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places. But they won't even do that—until it suits their convenience. They complacently take it for granted that we are so delighted to have them that we'll meekly put up with any kind of treatment and think it quite picturesque and interesting—so gay and dashing!"

"Then why do you invite them? They don't ask you to." Fred was becoming indignant, possibly because he, too, was provoked. Wives have a dreadful way of poisoning innocent husbands' minds.

Now, Molly might truthfully have replied: "Because you begged me to, dearest!" but she was too clever for that. "Simply because hostesses must have *some* one to amuse the girls," she said, and, generally speaking, this was even more truthful. "But the joke of it is that bachelors, even the best, believe that girls are invited to amuse *them!* You see, dear, all the nicest men are married, so we have to put up with what's left. Consequently, the left-overs are invited about so much that they get it fixed in their silly, conceited heads that

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they are fascinating. It's only that they are bachelors—unattached nonentities, hangers-on, sycophants, fillers-up of vacant places—the chorus in the comic opera of society. How I'd like to show them what we really think of them!"

"Oh, they'll learn their place fast enough," said Fred after a thoughtful pause, "when they're married."

Molly did not like that at all. So she showed Fred his place by ordering him to the telephone. "Tell your dear old friends that I must know at once," she said, adding to herself with a curious smile, "Men like Irving and Horace never marry. That's the worst of it!"

"I wonder if you received a note from my wife the other day?" began Fred pleasantly, over the telephone. "We thought it might have gone astray."

"Oh, yes! Yes, we got it—yes, indeed!" answered Horace, turning on enthusiasm. "Isn't it odd?—we were just on the point of writing—just this minute—must have been telepathy!"

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"I see," interpolated Fred. "Well, I hope we can count upon you, because——"

"But we had a tentative engagement for that evening," Horace went on, sparring for time and beckoning wildly for his roommate, who, being a lazy literary man, was just awake. Fred had elected to call them up—and down—at their fascinating bachelor quarters in an old-fashioned part of town with a delightful Bohemian atmosphere—"a tentative engagement for that evening," continued Horace glibly; "we've been trying to get out of it. You know, one doesn't like to decline invitations to *your* house unless one is compelled to, and we've always had such hard luck before, you know——"

"Tell them," whispered Molly at Fred's elbow, "that I can't wait any longer."

"It's the Fred Carrolls," whispers Horace to Irving. "Quick! what'll I tell them?"

"But are you coming?" asked Fred.

"We certainly are!" answered Horace, who was rattled, but seemed to be more en-

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thusiastic than ever. "It will be perfectly bully. Thank you ever so much. Thursday evening." Then, turning to Irving, who had begun to scowl and shake his sleepy head violently: "Well, what could I do? They had me with my back against the wall. Now, if you only got out of bed at a decent hour you could attend to these things yourself." Room-mates sometimes address each other thus in private, though you'd never suspect it of this pair, to see them laughing affectionately at each other's stories in public.

"Do you want to go away up there on a crowded Harlem train, and eat a dinner cooked by an Irish Biddy and talk about Henry James's style to a couple of strenuous females?" asked Irving, yawning. He was detaching the interesting appliance which held his mustaches fascinatingly erect while asleep. "Do you want to sit around in a stuffy little 'parlor' and admire the wedding presents?" he went on, becoming more and more eloquently awake. "Do you want to watch poor old Fred Carroll fetch

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and carry for his wife, like a well-trained dog, and wag his tail and look proud of himself for it? Do you want to watch them hold hands before everybody, and worry about each other's health, and say: 'Aren't you in a draught, dearest?' Do you want to waste a perfectly good evening on that sort of thing?"

"No," laughed Horace, who admired his room-mate's style more than Henry James's —"No, I don't; but we've got to now, whether we want to or not. So we may as well make the best of it." He was a philosopher.

Now, Molly knew something about dinners, even though she belonged to no clubs. She came of a family given to eating and drinking, and was proud of it. And she knew something about men, even though she was "a nice little thing." She knew, for instance, that certain of Fred's friends were not so envious of his happy lot as he beamingly took for granted. But she did not mean to let him know that. She was of the inferior sex. Man is the natural leader.

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to him, and as she could not be an economic entity, not knowing how, she had decided to tell him in a friendly way that she was going home to her father. They could still talk as friends. They *were* friends. There were to be no hysterics. She would put it altogether on her own selfish grounds, for that was the way to manage Fred; if she tried to prove to him that she was wrecking his life, he would only laugh at her, take her in his arms and kiss her. The days of their unhallowed kisses were done. . . .

Her peroration would be this: "Fred, would you share the income of any friend of yours, however large the income or dear the friend? Why, it is unthinkable to you. Well, so it is to me." Then she would say good-by—without any hysterics.

She was perfectly convinced she was right. It was an irrational knot. It was better to untie it before the knot became fast with children. She was glad now, oh, so glad, that she had no children. She and Fred were free to separate. It was right to separate. It would be wrong not to.

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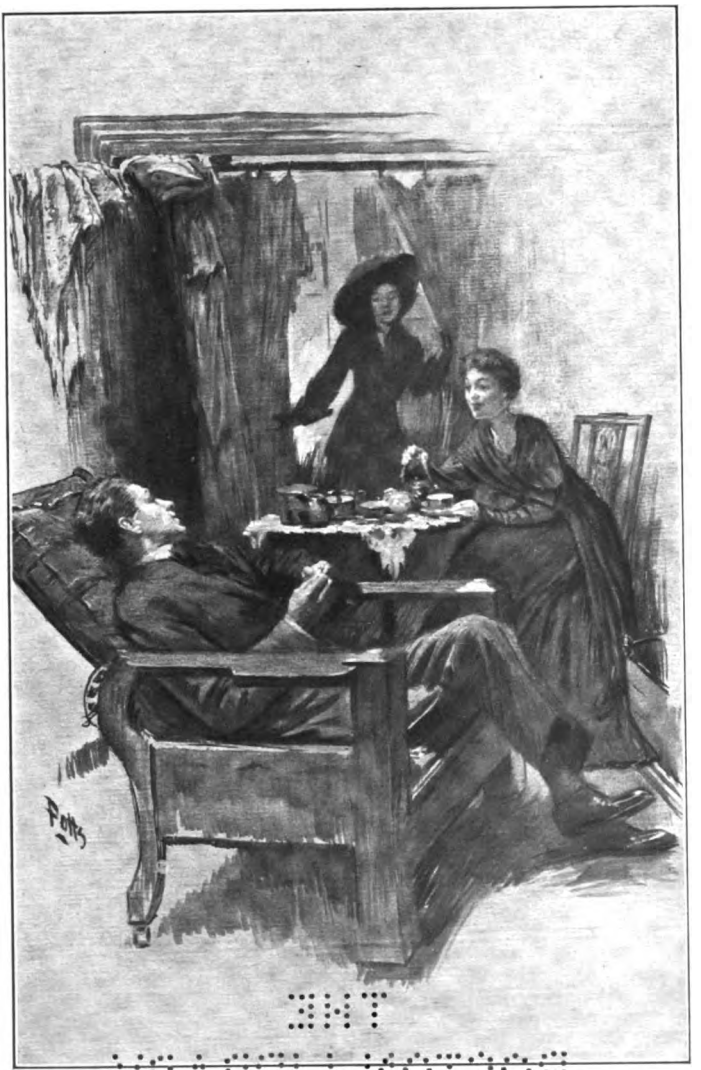

But as it happened she did interrupt him, though not at his work

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It was half dark when she arrived at the studio building, so she knew that she would not interrupt anything more serious than the cleaning of his brushes.

But as it happened she did interrupt him, though not at work. It seems that he had finished his work, and there, seated beside a pleasant open fire, were her husband and a woman. It was Muriel Vincent.

She was making him a cup of tea while the driving rain beat upon the skylight overhead. Molly recognized one of the numerous tea services she had received as wedding presents. Fred was leaning back in a long, low chair rolling a cigarette with his deft fingers, and seemed to be quite contented with his lot. There was something in the mutual attitude of these two which suggested that the scene was as familiar to them as it was novel to Molly.

Fred, arising briskly for a lazy man, attempted an introduction, stopped, seeing that it was unnecessary, both women explaining why at once.

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"I had no idea I was to have this good fortune so soon," sang Muriel easily.

"Nor I," said Molly, brightly returning the look.

Muriel in the shadow smiled as she watched the girl's face. "A conventional little thing," she thought. "This will do her good." To Muriel all wives in good and regular standing were conventional little things.

Strangely enough, instead of the calm dignity with which Molly commanded the studio in her imaginary interview with her husband, she suddenly felt neither calm nor dignified, nor did she think for the moment of saying good-by forever. Nevertheless, she held herself in hand and played the game pretty well for a conventional little thing who had had no experience with husbands who "disappear in private," as Muriel had put it in her lecture.

"How comfy you look!" was what she said aloud to them; to herself she said, "I might have guessed it!"

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"Won't you try *this* one?" said Fred, offering her a great, tall Italian chair quite as if she were a distinguished stranger. She had helped him bargain for that chair once when in Genoa. He brought her a footstool, too. He seemed quite desirous of making her also "comfy."

"You are just in time," said Muriel, bending over the tea things.

"For what?" asked Molly with a smile.

"For tea," said Fred.

"Oh," said Molly.

"May I make you a cup?" asked Muriel.

"Thanks, I've had my tea. I merely dropped in to escape the storm. Isn't it a dreadful storm?"

To this the others amicably agreed, and then there was a little pause, Muriel smiling with unseen relish. She loved this sort of thing, perhaps because she was a novelist. "Don't you think you'd better have another cup?" she asked.

"Do," urged Fred, "it's awfully good tea."

"Strong or weak?" Muriel inquired.

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"Pray don't trouble," said little Mrs. Carroll, quietly seating herself at the table, "I can make it myself." This seemed eminently permissible. It was her own tea service. Muriel had not even been the donor of this wedding present. Hence, Muriel did not object.

There was another little pause, which Muriel alone enjoyed.

"Where in the world is the sugar?" Molly asked her husband.

"I'll get it," said Muriel rising.

"Please don't trouble," said Molly with an amused smile, "Fred will find it."

"But I don't know where she keeps it," said Fred, and then he remembered too late that it is always best to think before speaking.

"Oh, I see," said Molly, and then, because she felt the crimson in her cheeks, began to laugh a little, for that seemed the only thing to do, and Fred laughed, too. Then Muriel, filling one of Molly's wedding presents with sugar, laughed most of all. They felt so much better then that they

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talked about other things, though they thought about only one thing.

"May I show the head to Molly?" asked Fred with a sudden inspiration.

"Oh, you have been doing Mrs. Vincent's portrait?" Molly inquired. She knew that it was an inspiration, but she felt relieved.

The head was an interesting study, and Molly said so. The brilliance was there, the superficial charm, the glitter—and a certain wistful desire for better things. Fred was not a bad psychologist, when he let himself go and only felt. It was when he tried to think that he ran into trouble. Molly was not so much in awe of the celebrity after seeing Fred's view of her. Like so many who are impressive in public, she was not at all impressive in conversation. But she was dreadfully good looking, and Fred treated her with the easy assurance of old friendship, fondness maybe.

"He knows me too well," said Muriel, gazing upon the canvas, with an interesting shrug. "It's a frightful *exposé*. I shall

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never let any one else see it." She rippled from one picturesque pose to another as she spoke. Molly watched her passively, thinking of many things, the lecture, for instance —"the grind-stone by day, the hearth-stone by night."

Fred was getting out other canvases. "You ought to come oftener," he said to Molly. "I've lots of junk here."

"Perhaps I ought." She smiled. Muriel saw the smile, saw the point, appreciated both.

"Muriel has been advising me to finish up some of this stuff," he went on from the corner where he was blowing dust off old sketches. "It's mostly rot, but it's awfully good of her to take an interest in it. Don't you think so, Molly?"

"I once loved your husband madly," Muriel remarked with elaborate carelessness, "but he would have none of me."

"What atrocious taste," said Molly with a side glance at the portrait.

"I thought so at the time," Muriel replied. "But I don't now," she added, with an appreciative look at Molly.

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Fred's young wife turned slowly and looked at Muriel with an air of calm, detached interest. "Dear me," she said to herself, "she seems to think she can afford to be nice to me!"

Muriel noted the look and her eyebrows shot up as Molly turned away. She was somewhat taken aback. She was amused, but aroused. Fred displaying canvases against chairs and table legs did not know that with two brief glances a gauntlet had been thrown down and taken up, and that he was the prize of contest.

"I must be going on," said Mrs. Carroll, fastening her gloves. "Good-by, my dear," to Fred. "So nice to have seen you," to Muriel. "I am at home on Wednesdays."

"Thanks," said Muriel, a little surprised. For a conventional little thing, that was not a bad exit speech, thought Muriel, remembering her own invitation to call, unheeded by Molly at the club.

"Are you going to some place where you don't want me tagging on?" asked Fred.

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There was a quizzical smile on his wife's face as she said one little word, "Home."

Fred laughed, and Muriel flashed a look of admiration. Muriel loved subtlety.

"Won't you come, too?" Molly asked her, as Fred turned for his hat, as if quite accustomed to leaving Muriel in possession.

Muriel shook her head. "Thanks," she said, going to the door with them, "I live here."

"Here?"

"In this building—across the hall."

"Ah, yes." There was a faint breath of contempt in Molly's tone, which annoyed Muriel—the smug superiority of a wife.

Bidding their guest good-by in the corridor, Mr. and Mrs. Frederic Carroll walked home together, remarking upon the afterglow down the cañons of the cross streets, an effect they had often admired together, being one which everybody on coming to New York discovers afresh, and informs New York of it, considerately. It was especially fine now after the rain, so they discussed it animatedly while both thought of

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something else, and each knew what the other was thinking about. . . . And yet here was a pair who had a sense of humor —they often told you so.

V

Always a fickle and variable thing is woman. Here were added excellent reasons for untying the irrational knot—another woman making tea for him, helping him in his work, brightening his gray horizon; a beautiful woman, too! and Fred was a worshipper of beauty. Yet the knot was allowed to remain.

If to be an economic nonentity were bad enough when happily married, and still worse after a husband has lost interest in his wife, surely it was worst of all, an intolerable disgrace, when he has begun to show interest in one who wasn't his wife. Previously she had loved and respected him; now she was inclined to hate and despise him, and yet instead of saying good-by forever she wanted to cling to the unworthy

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deceiver for, no doubt, a corresponding period of time. . . .

Somehow the vaunted sense of humor which the modern generation prates of with such humorless incessancy does not seem to help much when it is needed most. The important emotions do not stop to consult humor. They have their way with us quite as in the old days before the distressingly overworked phrase was invented.

Little Molly was confronted by a force greater than herself, imperious and quite irrational. It was sweeping her off her feet in the insolent manner of the real things of life, few of which are conspicuously rational. What we think about them in our little minds is interesting to us, but of no great consequence to them.

It is for some great racial purpose that this oft-maligned instinct of jealousy persists along with its all-praised parent, love. Perhaps this girl would now awake and become a woman, perhaps she would even make a man of her husband — but that depends!

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Throughout the sleepless night following the innocent little scene she had interrupted in the studio, this somewhat civilized young person was led by her uncivilized emotions into depths she had not dreamed of. She even, toward morning, saw herself accepting—so happy to accept—whatever portion her lord would grant her, if only he kept her near. Many a wife, she knew, had learned to adjust herself to a husband's past not only, but to a present as well, shutting her eyes to what she must not see, forgiving what seemed unforgivable because unable to keep her little share of the world without forgiving.

Oh, what a chance she had missed! Another was now helping him in his work ("which is dearer to him than you are," Muriel had said in her lecture, "*as it ought to be if he is a man and not a mere bridegroom,*") another was reviving his stifled ambition, filling a place in his dreary, disappointing existence—and the place was hers, his wife's. She had lost it, and it was her fault, not his. She had allowed herself

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to become a "cunning little thing," a doll, an expensive plaything; he was tired of this plaything and now wanted another. "When a woman ceases to be a luxury to a man she becomes a nuisance—unless by that time she has made herself a necessity." Those words, scarcely heeded at the time, came back to her now, and they too, by an ironic coincidence, had been uttered by Muriel! . . .

Well, by dawn the paroxysm had passed, as paroxysms have a way of doing in many a little apartment, while the yet new-looking wedding presents confidently wait to be dusted. With the clear daylight she looked the matter in the face to see what could be done about it. She would not mope and moan and break her heart. She was not that sort. There was plenty of latent spirit in this girl. Nothing had ever happened to bring it out. Few women are loafers by nature, as are so many men. Women have seldom had a chance to loaf until modern times, and it is to be noted that even in their clubs they have not completely mas-

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tered the art. They must have programmes for improving their minds.

Since she could not do without him, she resolved to get him back. She knew that she could make a fuss, and he would do his duty, rather than hurt her. But she did not want duty. She wanted love.

How could she get that, with her little quiver-full of charms, all known, all worn, matched with that opulent other? She knew that her man was no inexperienced weakling, but she also knew how the very meretriciousness of Muriel's allure, so maddening to contemplate, "interested" men who had been kept too close to "the grindstone by day and the hearth-stone by night." Whether "the other" would deem it worth while to exercise her exotic arts did not occur to Molly. A young wife always believes her husband worth while, perhaps because she found him so; just as she always thinks her husband particularly susceptible, for, again, had not she found him so?

First of all she would never let Fred know what she had gone through. For she

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was aware that there is nothing so ugly and disillusionizing as an exhibition of jealousy. That was why she stayed in her bedroom until after he had breakfasted and gone whistling to the studio, thinking perhaps of tea time. He would have seen her red eyes and perhaps have guessed the rest. He doubtless suspected her already.

She repressed another natural feminine impulse. She might easily make *him* jealous. She could flirt with the first available male she found, and her husband would come running back to put the poacher off. That device was employed by some women and most playwrights to produce an illusion of happy marriage; the estranged pair rushed passionately into each other's arms —and stayed there until the curtain went down. But she was not sure that this would keep him long from stealing away again to gaze at the forbidden fruit, perhaps to pluck it this time. Fred was quick as a woman in such matters; he might see through this sorry little ruse and despise her for it. At any rate, she would despise

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herself for it. She was sick of the "tricks of her trade," as Muriel had called them. No, she wanted him to come back to her of his own accord, because he preferred her to all others. She wanted all or nothing—a large order for a cunning little thing.

VI

Fred had painted Muriel's portrait, and when it was finished she had remained to do his—in a story about monogamy. It began, "Some are born monogamous, some achieve monogamy, and some have monogamy thrust upon them." The second paragraph was like unto it: "But when a man is polygamous by nature, monogamous by contract, and fascinating by temperament there comes trouble when success arrives with women in its train."

Fred did not know that she was writing a story about him. But he was not sorry that she saw fit to continue her visits even after the canvas was finished. She seemed to know a good deal about his trade and he needed some one with a fresh eye to

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show his work to, and talk it over with; particularly some woman, because no man, even the most devoted friend, will look so long, listen so patiently as even a casual woman friend, and this one happened to be an old friend of whom he had not seen much of late years since she became successful—far more successful, as it happened, than he was, despite her tribute in her story about him. Maybe that was why he failed to recognize it when published. Muriel concocted notable heroes. No wonder the women loved her works.

Fred did not think much of her books, but he liked her looks, and said so. He thought her stories absurd and told her that, too. "You always write at the top of your voice when you write about men," he said, chaffing her. But she did not seem absurd when she was with them, nor, by the way, did she talk to Fred at the top of her voice in his studio. She knew a good deal about men. She knew more about men than she cared to tell. Men were her *mètier*.

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Poor Muriel, she was by nature one of those same "idealists." For that matter, every one is—by nature. She covered it up with a glittering shield of cynicism, perhaps to defend herself. Scratch a live cynic and you'll find a dead sentimentalist. Muriel was not dead. Though she had received some of the hardest raps a woman can suffer and yet live, she always sprang up again, crying, "I believe! I believe!" Surely, there is something noble in this. In regard to men she was cynical only about those men she knew. She still had faith in those she did not know, hence she sought to know many, and Fred happened to be the one at present about whom she chose to wrap her pretty colors.

He had the fascinating "reserve" of those who can't talk—so attractive to chatterboxes—a "deep, strong nature," she called it in her earlier stories, for Fred had been the hero of more than one of them. This, combined with a fastidiously appreciative way of regarding her in his "reserved" silences, made him quite delightful to

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Muriel, who could not help wanting to arouse him; he was so big and clean and fine, and seemed so provokingly sure of himself, with his smiling air of raillery, as if saying, "Oh, I've been through all that sort of thing, you know. Nothing can touch me now." She knew that he was not so crude as most American men, but compared to certain men she had met in various parts of the world and in quite various circumstances he seemed sweet and boyish. But he did not know this. He still had a great deal to learn, and she had reached a place where innocence appealed to her again. He interested her very much, and she regarded him with that frank curiosity as to his married happiness which women who have once known them "very well" manifest in other women's husbands. She wanted to draw him out on that question. He only drew back. That was a matter he did not care to go into with her, nor with anybody. He could not go into it with dear little Molly. So it seemed unfair to go into it even with himself. He refused to

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think about it, like many another good, kind husband.

Good, kind husbands always interested Muriel. She enjoyed watching them out of the corners of her long eyes while travelling. She diagnosed Fred's case at once, and his ostrich-like attempts to be a "settled-down, married man" almost made her laugh in his face, it was so amusing. But rather pathetic too; she knew what some of his former colleagues in Paris had expected of him as a painter, and she deemed him worthy of better things than turning himself into a dull money-making machine for maintaining a ménage which no longer charmed him, she fancied, as much as the club he no longer habituated. Dining at clubs with his fellow craftsmen would have been, at any rate, more profitable to him, and therefore to his "helpmeet," but he could not do that without neglecting her. Therefore he dined with his lawful wife, according to the prescribed custom, either at home, or in the company of common friends. Muriel had seen the same process going on with others,

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not only in the arts, but in the professions and business. Men need diversion at the end of their day's work, and the reason many married men of whom one would never suspect it "went into society," stupid as it was in America, was that there was no other place to go.

She was rather sceptical about any man's remaining happy in marriage. She intimated as much to Fred. "Well, you ought to know," he said. So she did not try again very soon. She was far beyond being hurt by such references. Muriel only laughed. But she respected the reproach and admired him for delivering it. So many men that Muriel met, especially young ones, like him, enjoyed the "misunderstood" rôle, and she was apt at playing the "sympathetic" part, if they were worth while, though usually she despised them afterward.

To Muriel it was still a source of wonder, rather pretty, almost virginal wonder, that men, these great, hulking, predatory males, so intense and oblivious in the pursuit of

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business or sport, should take women so seriously, should become so intense and predatory in the pursuit of females. And it was still a source of feminine zest to make them feel that way. She was not so wicked as some wives preferred to think; she was not in the least "heartless," as some men declared. She wanted the power and the glory of loving and being loved; only she did not happen to be of the mother type. Surely civilization has its uses for her type too, just as for men who are not "domestic," though civilization always hates to admit it.

She said she was glad to be of use to him in his work. She said it with a twinkle in her superb eyes which made Fred's flutter and fall—down to his palette, to his work again. But she meant it. For even her type is glad to aid and comfort the stronger sex in its battles with the world. They've got to be, as things are arranged for them by the gallant sex, which tells them how much they enjoy self-sacrifice. Well, as a matter of fact, she did help and hearten him, though as the portrait progressed they

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talked about other interesting matters too, such as themselves and each other.

Her assumption of superior knowledge of life he ignored or laughed at, harking back to the old days when she was a mere girl and he was a man. He still bullied her—and (alas!) she still liked it. "As a matter of fact," he said, "you have never really 'lived,' though that, of course, is just what you think you have done. You have only experimented. You have never got into the game. You have never become part of the real fabric of life. You have only looked on."

"And you have found the real thing? Is that your point?"

"My point is that you have missed it," he retorted, carefully choosing a brush from the little brown jug at his elbow.

"Well, it's instructive to look on at those who have found it. Is that why you have me around? You wish to do me good?"

"It's because you're so good to look at," he replied with a return of the youthful

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heedlessness of former days, which amused and pleased her.

"Well, keep on looking, if you think it will do *you* good."

"Oh, I will, I will," he bantered. "I'm not afraid."

"So I have heard you say," she answered, continuing to smile at him.

He stopped painting and looked up. "Dear me, Muriel, do you think you are tempting me?" he jeered at her pleasantly.

"How can I when you are perfectly happy?" she answered after a pause.

He kept on painting.

"Do you know, I believe I could play the devil with you if I wanted to." She laughed delightfully, bending to look into his eyes.

He was perfectly willing to let her think so, as long as he knew she was doing nothing of the sort. And if at times a certain well-known impulse arose, to follow where she led—the old instinct for pursuit and capture, with its recklessness and regret—he pulled himself up short with the thought, "That's so, I don't do this sort of thing

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any more." It was not because he did not want to—that high ideal of himself had crashed long ago—but because he had no right to. He had a wife. He had promised to love her. Such promises, naturally, do more harm than good when the appalling discovery is made that they cannot be kept. But the promise to cleave to her was a mere matter of will. He had lots of it. That promise could be kept. It must be kept. So he went on painting.

"Did it ever occur to you that it's a pretty good thing to keep your self-respect?" he asked one day in the light manner with which serious things are tossed out by the generation which worships Humor and fears its god. "It's one of the few real satisfactions left us by civilization."

"The great art," gibed Muriel, "the real civilization, is to do anything you want and yet keep your self-respect. The thing you *want* is the thing you *need*."

"That's all right," he retorted pointedly, "for any one whose capacity for self-deception is unlimited."

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"Which corresponds," rejoined Muriel glibly, "with the capacity for conceiving and achieving great things. The trouble with you, Fred, is that there is a big man inside, only you won't let it out. Copy-book maxims are for copy-book minds. Timid souls always look to tradition, convention and authority. The mob couldn't see anything else, if it tried. It couldn't *do* anything else, even if it could see. But big men have to make their own laws, or else they won't make big successes."

"Fine!" He laughed. "Muriel, you're a wonder!"

Yet Fred thought there was some truth in this. Most men are easily convinced that there is a pretty big thing inside. And the joke of it is that they are generally right about it!

It was all rather silly and very attractive. She was beautiful and somewhat naughty, and he was still quite young. . . .

Molly's unexpected visit put a new complexion upon all this.

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VII

He did not want to think about his marriage, but now he was obliged to. Mischief-making Muriel had caused both these ingenuous young people to stop and think. What a pity! If it weren't for these muck-rakers the Carrolls and other well-meaning reactionaries might remain dormant and docile, piously calling themselves "conservatives" and doing their sober best to conserve a well-arranged collection of empty shells, which have acquired the dignified tone of time, prettily polished by the habitual handling of the generations which thrived and grew strong on the vital substance formerly found therein. . . .

He did not want to hurt his tender little wife. She was too fine and sweet for small worries of this sort, however groundless. She was his wife, and he wished to protect her. Could that be why he had not mentioned Muriel's recurrence in his orbit—and in his studio? He did not believe in talking shop at the dinner-table. The home

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was sacred. "When I lock my studio door I want to forget everything in it."

By nature he was a fearless, honest young man with gallant defiance of the world in his steady eye. He was tenderly fond of his mate, and would have preferred to talk to her, just as he would have preferred to love her to distraction, if he could. But, since it is one of the interesting taboos of this artificial cult, that a man married to one woman should never see very much of other women, he could not bring himself to talking about it to his wife, for they were both pious devotees of the cult. The theory seems to be that if a man loves his wife, how can he care enough for other women to see much of them? or if he has grown tired of seeing too much of his wife, how can he be trusted with other women? For women are females and, therefore, males can have but one real use for them. The implication may not be very flattering to our so-called civilization, but we have to take our semi-barbaric conventions as we find them, and

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make the civilized best of it, or the decivilizing worst. This worthy young man was making the best of it by accepting a little surreptitious solace from a woman whom in his free and fastidious bachelor days he had been inclined to ignore or avoid, there being so many others he was free to see, and she being one of those who "always made him tired." He was making the worst of it by saying nothing about it to his wife, whom he had promised to cherish until death would them part.

The portrait of Muriel was brought out, not to hide behind it, but to comfort Molly with it. He had nothing to hide, except a little "mutual helpfulness" and a little innocent play, which the world prefers to suspect when grown men and women play it, though they are better able to take care of themselves, it would naturally seem, than youths and maidens in whom we beamingly encourage it.

Fred had done nothing to be ashamed of. Nor was he likely to make his wife "unhappy" so long as she trusted him. Her de-

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pendence appealed to his honor, his loyalty, his sentiment, like the helplessness of a child, if not to his heart. He would gladly have died for her; but living with any one person was a bore. He wanted her to be happy, to have everything. At the expense of nearly everything he really wanted, he was giving her everything except the one thing essential to justify and glorify all the rest, and this he could not give because it was gone.

So it is just as well that Molly did not make a disillusionizing fuss. And if she had tried the ancient trick of flirting with another man he would not only have kicked the poacher out; he might have followed him out in disgust. He still believed in her, even if his belief in himself had been shaken by the disillusionizing crash of that peculiar promise to love. Molly's happiness was in a perilous place.

Well, now that he stopped to think about it, he thought clear to the bottom, or believed so. It never occurred to him that Molly had been thoughtlessly selfish and

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indulgent. Had she not given up her cunning idea of a "career" for marriage? She seemed to be doing the right things in the right way, quite in accord with the prevalent conception of a dutiful wife. She was an excellent manager. She was quite economical compared with so many wives. He had to urge her to buy pretty clothes. She was sympathetic when he overworked and told him he mustn't do it. She was constantly concerned over his giving up his serious work. "But I warned you!" she said prettily. "You would marry me!" Naturally, he did not care to remind her of his youthful hopes and ambitions. That was one reason why he had stopped talking shop in the home, which was sacred.

Therefore, since it could not be her fault, God bless her! it must he his. For when this delicate relationship went askew among their friends wasn't it always the fault of one or the other? or, as the gossips sometimes decided, with still more sententious head-wagging, "There was fault on both sides."

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It never occurred to them that falling in love with some one else was not the cause of unhappy marriages, but the result. It never occurred to the onlookers, and seldom to the victims, that it might be the fault of neither, nor of any human being, but of the very human institution they had tried to uphold amid conditions of civilization that sometimes render it intolerable to the individuals concerned and unprofitable to civilization, which is still more concerned. Calling it God's holy ordinance does not seem to make such unions holy. Monogamy is surely right and reasonable for the race at present, and is probably not so unnatural as the Muriels think. So it seems rather a pity that it should be rendered as difficult as possible by marriage, the very institution which is supposed to foster monogamy and the race. Yet the archaic customs and many of the quaint conceptions of this well-meaning institution seem to hinder instead of help monogamy. To be sure, it is a great comfort to make the Deity our scapegoat when

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these Frankenstein monsters of ours turn and rend their inventors, though a bit blasphemous withal.

But those who see it seldom say so—and why should they? The unhappily married would seem to be talking about themselves, and are properly discredited. The happily married are afraid they would seem to be talking about themselves, and are properly discreet. Whereas those who are not married at all would seem to be talking about "something they know nothing of," and are properly disregarded.

Thus the comic conspiracy of silence is ably sustained on all sides, and those who break it do so at the peril not only of themselves, but of those, it may be, who are dearer. For he (more particularly she) who says that marriage might as well be improved, is apt to be accused of attempting to destroy the necessary institution, and those who hold their peace can usually call it duty or being brave. For we fear our ruthless monsters. Sometimes we even love them. Why not? They are ours; we made them.

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All creators are prejudiced in favor of their own creations.

So it is no great wonder that one out of every twelve more or less concientious attempts to play the game according to Frankenstein ends in defeat, nor that so many of the eleven other pairs of players, whether they cheat each other or not, enjoy jests in popular songs and situations in successful farces (which would not be popular or successful unless enjoyed) founded upon the failure of that relation in life which should be as beautiful and sacred as motherhood, which it involves.

But all such stuff is so unpleasant. There are many good people in the world, why not tell them so; they like to be reminded of it. There are many beautiful things in life; it is pleasanter to say so, thus making the world a better and more beautiful place for our having been in it. The way to cure all evils is to shut our eyes to them. If there be a little muck in the home, don't rake it; the home is sacred. Draw the blinds, keep out the tell-tale light. Sweep the dust of genera-

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tions, and the disease germs it has bred, under the pianola where no one will notice it (for a while longer) and play rag-time. That is the way to make good cheer and get an uplift, thus helping one another to be truer, stronger, more honest men and women, for the glory of God and the nation's service. The Church is the place to preach, whether many of us go there now or not. When I attend the theatre I want to laugh. All this dreary modern talk only delays the action and destroys my daughter's beautiful ideals, which she inherited with a spinning-wheel from her great-grandmother, who was a perfect woman if there ever was one.

Well, young Fred was not thinking about the institution of marriage—few of them do—but about his own marriage. Such outrageous views were hardly a part of his enlightened training for the most important and far-reaching undertaking of life. He blamed himself for being a brute (which he wasn't), and let it go at that (which was unfortunate). But if he hadn't been a brute he thought he would have stayed in

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love with his agreeable little wife—who had given him her all—just as girls who are romantically rescued from a watery grave should fall in love and stay so with their noble rescuers, no matter how their tastes, aspirations and lives may part after the great accident.

But since he was a brute, what was the use of pretending to himself to be anything else? That is the trouble with carefully inculcating silly ideals in our young. When false ideals are found out, unhypocritical persons are apt to abandon not only the poor little cracked ideals, but their poor little cracked selves—and better ideals. As Molly said nothing about her discovery in the studio he began to think that she suspected him of being a brute. And as he indignantly considered the circumstances too trivial to dignify with discussion, a curious psychic phenomenon now appeared: Those past casual meetings with Muriel took on a desirability they never held before. The absurd superimposed notion that her presence in his studio was questionable lent

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a glamour to it, the charm of romance, totally lacking until now, altogether impossible in the old days of his bachelor freedom when he could pick and choose.

He was not in love with Muriel. This was no "grand passion." The majority of these sorry little affairs do not become even passions, if left undisturbed by the world, like the innocent associations of the unmarried. But once give them the allure of forbidden fruit, then curiosity is aroused to gaze upon it, even though not a kind of fruit they would naturally choose to eat. This sometimes involves clandestine meetings, as things are arranged for many of them, with the adventurous zest of sharing a delightful secret—and the rest follows naturally, or rather quite unnaturally, but often quite unfortunately.

Fred Carroll was no stripling, and he had known Muriel all his life. He had never thought of such a thing as being in love with her. So why should he rudely put her out of his studio, where she was doing no harm and considerable good?

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And if his wife chose to insult them by being suspicious and proudly silent, he was sorry, but that was not their fault. Even though married he had some rights. The sacredness of his own personality should not be invaded. . . .

Thus we behold a nice little pair, well-mated by nature for nature's purposes, well equipped by inherent characteristics for a civilized union which might be beautiful to them and beneficial to the race, now being driven toward the rocks of ruin and waste by the adventitious characteristics of the modern marriage. It was not because they failed to believe in its exactions; they believed in them firmly. It was not due to any infraction of its laws; they cherished them fondly. Marriage itself was divorcing Fred and Molly. What God had joined together man was putting asunder.

Man did it, of course, in the name of God, because that is the way man likes to do things. But how it must amuse the great Humorist, the tender Forgiver of our sins!

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VIII

That is "all very well in theory, but *we* are practical." Such a view of marriage does not excuse this young man in our shocked eyes for playing with other men's wives, or ex-wives, especially now when recognized by him as dangerous; most especially while allowing his own true wife to trust him. Some of our conventions may be absurd, but we must have grooves for running an unwieldy society, and no one can build his own without consulting society. Ought he not to leave Muriel?

Precisely the conclusion he came to within twenty-four hours—without even waiting to consult Muriel about it. Copy-book maxims may be for the mob, but so, it seems, is marriage. He had married. He must dot his i's and cross his t's—or leave the class. . . .

He found that her presence in his studio, now that her portrait was finished, had been causing a little gossip in other studios. He condemned the gossips to Hades. He

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didn't care what they thought. So long as his conscience was clear, why should he? But it was so unfair to Molly. Her coming to the studio had also been noted and mentioned, humorously, by a woman who painted in the same building.

"Oh, cut it all out," he said to himself with a shrug of distaste for the whole ridiculous situation. "It's the only thing to do." Another shrug.

A good young husband, you see; he was going to flee temptation and thus strengthen his Character. A model marriage; neither business nor pleasure should stand between him and Duty. Perhaps he will now go home to his lawful wife, confess all, and be forgiven in a tender scene of domestic comedy: "Darling, I have been a brute." "No, dearest, it was all my fault." "But you were so sweet and patient, precious." "But you were so brave and strong, sweetheart." And then the happy pair in concert as the curtain falls: "Hereafter we shall both be mutually forbearing and considerate, patient and self-sacrificing"; thus making a

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happy marriage, approved by society and useful to civilization. And in each other's arms their senses might beguile their minds, for the time being, into believing that nothing of the sort could ever happen again, and that this was true love and true marriage. At any rate, it would be truly legal whether truly love or not, and so we, the spectators, could rejoice at the triumph of the proprieties and go back to our happy homes saying, "Yes, it's a pretty good world after all!"

Well, that would not be such a bad ending, if we could only believe it to be the end—if only the curtain would stay down—about as good a solution, perhaps, as we should expect for this problem of nature's which civilization has never assimilated (and probably never will entirely), and so, being sick of it, declines, with an invalid's inertia, even a frank attempt to assimilate it, preferring petulantly to swallow it whole like a pill, with a sugar-coating of unwholesome sentimentalism. . . .

But that was not to be the end in this

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case. Fred did not go home and confess. He was not given to confessions—one reason, perhaps, being that he was too considerate. It would not be nice to make insinuations against Muriel, and it would be a shame to make his young wife realize that she had a brute for a husband! There was nothing worth confessing. He simply attached himself to his wife and his work, and kept out of Muriel's reach for nearly a week after the precipitating episode.

They happened to enter the studio building together. They went up in the elevator together. "I haven't seen you for ages," she said with gracious conventionality, quite as if nothing had happened—and nothing had. "Where *have* you been hiding?"

He smiled at her phrase. Hiding? Did she think he was afraid of her? She did not (as yet). "Oh, Molly and I have been trotting around to tea-fights, drumming up trade," he answered lightly, but feeling more interest in her nearness, strangely enough, even more admiration for her clothes, than usual. They stepped out of

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the elevator together. "My wife was good enough to be impressed with the thing I did of you. So she is trying to work some of her friends—rather disgusting, but, as she says, they work us to amuse them, so why not?" He seemed to want Muriel to appreciate that his wife was not merely a cunning little thing.

"Portraits, you mean?" she said with sympathetic interest. "Have you landed any sitters?"

"No." They walked down the corridor together. "I seem to be out of the running."

"I think I've got a commission for you," she said with simple friendliness. "May I make you a cup of tea?"

"Thanks, ever so much," said the painter briskly, "but I'm horribly busy."

"Let me know when you've finished your work and I'll tell you about it."

They had reached her door. Fred was unlocking it for her. He began to chuckle. "I'm thinking of barring you out of my studio entirely," he said lightly. "It's making talk."

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She turned and looked at him. He avoided her eyes. "Fred," she began, "has your wife——"

"No," he interrupted with a resentful sneer, "she's not that sort." He was amazed at Muriel.

"—has your wife Wednesdays at home, did she say? You silly!" Muriel laughed at him. "Of course she is not that sort. I could see that—even if she hadn't asked me to call. I want so much to know her well." He had thrown open the door for her. "You won't come in?" she asked.

"Thanks, I'm busy."

She did not urge him, but within the open door she turned and smiled at him again. "Are you one of those amusing little men afraid of 'What will people say?'?"

"I wasn't aware of being afraid of anything," he remarked with dignity.

She walked out to him with even more dignity, then suddenly shaking her head under his face, "Booh!" she said bewitchingly.

He laughed with her at himself, flushing a little.

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She burlesqued a tragic attitude. "Are you going to put me out of your life?"

"Sure!" he replied, smiling easily, and stepped across to his own door.

"How exciting!" called out Muriel, laughing gayly.

He pretended not to hear.

Both doors closed.

Well, at least he wasn't afraid of letting her think him afraid, if she wanted to. He was glad that it was over. And he kept away. It was not easy. He had acquired the habit, like smoking. He did not realize how it had grown upon him until he had to break it. She was both a stimulant and a sedative. He missed her in his work. He missed her in his play. The daily grind had begun to tell at last, and the need, strong in natures like his, for fun, sparkle, excitement, was storming within him. It is an organic need; joyousness is a necessary ingredient; but he only substituted exercise and more work for it. He did not mind hard work. He had always worked hard, just as he had always played

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hard, though he often said, after the manner of fond husbands, "If it hadn't been for that little woman I never would have amounted to anything." He had believed it at first. He still repeated it occasionally. He wanted her to believe it, every one to believe it—including himself.

But it was being borne in upon him that he was amounting to very little. At the present rate, how could he ever amount to much? It was all right to give up fun, success, everything for marriage. He had held to that orthodox tenet of the faith. But suppose your marriage is not a success. Why, then you haven't anything. This made it hard to keep the faith.

Marriage was beginning to look like a cage to him. He had been lured in by the bait of love, and now, having devoured the bait, he could only beat his wings against the bars and sigh for the freedom to soar, which he had not valued until seen through the locked door, bruising himself and pitying his mate, who had entered gladly with him when he too was glad and both were blind.

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Well, self-pity was a weakness he despised. He shook it off, and dropped in at the club at tea hour, substituting cocktails, like many another honest fellow whose marriage was not turning out very well, though none of the crowd knew nor was curious.

Alcohol helped a little, good-fellowship more. Those who don't like their cages, he thought, have no right to kick. They can't get out but they oughtn't to have gone in. You may be blind with hunger, but don't eat if you prefer not to be caught. As a matter of fact, that precisely was the way an increasing number of these fellows one met at clubs seemed to look at it nowadays, even those who said "You lucky dog!" sighing comfortably by the broad fireplace, which was not made of asbestos at the club. At least, they did not satisfy their soul-hunger in conventional cages, viewed and approved by society! It was an interesting subject. Carroll was learning to smile at it with good-humored cynicism, like the rest. Meanwhile he saw no

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more of Muriel, and treated his wife with polite and tender devotion, painfully perplexed at her continued, but now apparently cheerful, obliviousness to what she had discovered—only a week or two ago, though to him it seemed longer. By and by his wings might become tired, or atrophied by disuse. He might even become habituated to his well-furnished cage. That is the way wild birds are domesticated. Canaries like it. . . .

But such worthy intentions as Fred's are not like swearing off tobacco or alcohol, a matter of individual will. In these greater concerns contending wills are to be reckoned with. He had not reckoned with Muriel's, nor with Molly's either, as we shall see later. Muriel's will was felt first.

Within a fortnight after making his well-kept resolution Fred found, one morning in his studio, a note addressed in her distinguished hand. It gave him a thrill which bade him beware. "No, you don't, you delightful devil!" he laughed, tearing it open eagerly all the same.

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But it was merely to inform him briefly that an acquaintance of hers was "dying to have her neurasthenic face and limp figure painted by Frederic Carroll. She is coming to have luncheon with me to-day. Drop in at half after one and see if she interests you enough. She is vulgarly rich, and I think it may lead to other commissions." "Neurasthenic" was the word just then; it's old-fashioned now.

"Oh, she'll interest me all right," laughed Fred. This was a chance he could not afford to miss. Hope of amounting to something revived. He could put his heart into the work he loved. He could become wholly absorbed, oblivious to all other passions. This endless succession of carefully done pot-boilers occupied only as much of him as "fancy-work" exacted of a certain type of old-fashioned wife, not yet extinct. He went to the meeting eagerly, hardly thinking now, the predatory male, of Muriel.

He did not think of Muriel until he arrived there. Then he thought of nothing else. She was alone. The neurasthenic

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friend had sent word "at the last moment" that the pleasure would have to be postponed. So Muriel told him. "And I have such a good luncheon waiting, too!" she said with apparent annoyance. "But no matter. I can coach you to handle her vanity better before you meet her," laughed Muriel, leading the way. "Your sitter will keep, even if my luncheon won't."

And she proceeded at once, as they sat down opposite each other, to tell him interestingly all about her neurasthenic friend. The friend was bona fide; so was the desire to have Fred paint her. She had been fascinated by the dashing portrait of the stunning Mrs. Vincent, now in the latter's possession, and by the subject's enthusiasm over his work. Fred was delighted and grateful. Ambition soared for the moment; fame looked down and smiled from afar.

And if the resilient artist nature now expanded until quite capable of compassing the world, the moral nature of the man was generous enough to give just credit to this old friend of his youth! What a good sort

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she was, such a woman of the world, so serene and superior to any pouting pique over his rude neglect of her. He thought he had known her all his life; but he felt that he really knew her now for the first time. And, as is usually the case when one suddenly "discovers" a member of the opposite sex, there came with it a delicious thrill of amazement. "Why didn't I appreciate this girl long ago!" he said to himself, meaning "before too late!" though he would not say that—even to himself.

Also, the luncheon was delicious. But somehow or other he became ill at ease during the intimate process. He had never felt embarrassed with Muriel before. He had lunched with her often; there was nothing in that; but not since the new and unhealthy complexion put upon their innocent relations by Molly's innocent visit to her husband's studio and by her husband's innocent refusal to discuss it or make a mountain out of a mole-hill. The fact that it was forbidden now to be lunching alone with Muriel made it conscious, delectable,

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dangerous. All the past years of indifference were betraying him. He had to hold himself in check. He had to do some more of that detestable *thinking* about himself. Such a nuisance to be married! Could he never be natural without being wrong?

He expanded a little over the coffee—as she had known he would. Muriel had never tried very hard to charm him before. She was trying to do so now, just to see what would happen. She was no longer the crude enthusiast he had once known and patronized. Nor had she forgotten his wife's superior look of disdain. Muriel had laughed good-naturedly, but, it may be recalled, she had lightly taken up the little gauntlet. Why not?

Fred gravely, authoritatively, commended her expert knowledge of the civilized art of eating.

"Oh, it's always a pleasure to feed 'em," said Muriel with a daintily derisive smile, as if trying to say it as grossly as she could, "especially men who appreciate the good things of life. You don't give me a chance

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as often as some of the others do," she added languidly, to remind him that there were others. She played with the fact for a moment—her first arrow. It glanced off harmlessly. It did not disturb him in the least; it repelled him rather. She recalled that he had always been perversely insensible to jealousy. It was part of the same innate fastidiousness which had kept him out of more mischief in his youth than had stern moral warnings, making hideous vice sound more attractive than it could ever really hope to be.

"But then, to be sure," she began afresh, "you have put me out of your life, haven't you, Fred?" She laughed idly. She knew how to laugh. So few women do; even those who don't gurgle or cackle. "How have you enjoyed keeping my baneful influence out of your life? Have you grown 'strong' now?"

She was making it all playful and easy. "Oh, I've tried hard to bear up without you —in my life," he said, adopting her note. He no longer had the upper hand. "I've

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really been too horribly busy to play with you or any one else," he added indifferently.

"I see. I wondered what was the reason." She shot a merry, good-natured glance across at him from between her two long, well-modelled, rather heavily jewelled hands which framed her face as she sat there closely opposite to him, her elbows resting indolently on the table. It was studied indolence, and he knew it. But she did it so well! She was so confoundedly stunning, and so confoundedly aware of it. He earnestly intended to dislike her who was now forbidden, as earnestly as he intended to love his wife, who was required. But a man cannot will himself to do either of these things. It was only producing opposite results, alas! He wanted to disarrange her studied pose. The way he desired to do it was by crumpling it up in his arms, and bringing a new light into her mocking eyes. Dear me! he wouldn't do that! What shocking impulses pop into the heads of even the best of the stronger sex at times. Possibly their generous self-

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restraint is not fully appreciated by the weaker sex. Fred merely watched her cautiously as she rippled to another interesting pose; one arm down now, hand extended to caress her coffee cup, while one of the long, pear-shaped ear-rings, flicked by a tinkling ring in passing, swung back and forth for a moment, flashing high lights. "Was that the only reason you avoided me?" she asked smiling—not alluringly, but, confound her again, with humorous candor. Her woman-of-the-world poise was disconcerting. He had forgotten how to meet it of late years. That's the trouble with neglecting an art.

"Not at all," he replied brusquely, trying for the upper hand, as formerly; "I don't care to know any one too well—not even my beloved self!" He made a significant grimace. "Sometimes, you know, you bore me dreadfully, Muriel dear." The bullying note was safest He felt superior again.

"Is this one of the times?"

He nodded. "Especially when you smile that way." He laughed at her.

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She kept on smiling "that way" without the movement of an eyelash until his more or less critical gaze shifted, which made her laugh at *him*, although he was merely looking for a place to drop his cigarette ashes, as he made clear by his silently ostentatious action.

Now, Muriel was not a cruel siren. She had a big ego, but a big heart too; they often go together, though they sometimes get in each other's way. She played her game fairly, whenever she could; she shot only on the wing; as fairly as her game can be played. If, for example, he had let her know, humbly or humorously, why he had kept so sedulously out of her now disturbing presence, if he had acknowledged that he was licked and had begged for mercy—as was often done by young men, and older ones who wanted to feel young; but who can blame any man, a member of the stronger sex, the natural leaders, for not caring to acknowledge that to an old friend! Especially idealists like Fred, who hate the truth and yet are not cowards, never asking

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quarter from others or from themselves. Moreover, in this case there was that well-cherished loyalty to his precious, if not perfect, wife. Such a confession to Muriel would have been a reflection upon Molly's charm, an enormity intolerable to contemplate. All of which goes to prove how impossible it is to love two women at the same time and yet keep faith with both and with one's self, even in these innocent preludes to the grand symphony. True love is monogamous, whatever marriage may be.

He turned his eyes away from her. She was too artificial. He looked again; she was too attractive. "It never occurs to you," he went on, overworking the bully attitude, "that I see through your poses, my dear Muriel. Why don't you let go and be natural for a change?—just once, to see how it feels."

"Why should I," she returned imperturbably, "when you are admiring me so much this way?" She did not change the pose of a finger.

"Perfectly shameless!" he railed at her,

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avoiding her gaze; "utterly abandoned! You always have made me rather tired, you know."

He looked about the room indifferently, sniffed expertly at her dark, heavy hangings, trying to make it all sound like the gay banter of former days.

She made no reply. It was not necessary. She was quietly letting him entangle himself. She sensed what was going on within him, fully now, and she responded to it with the glow and glory a woman knows when she first feels her power over a member of the stronger sex. The gentlest, the kindest are likely to enjoy it, even, it is said, when they don't respond—differing therein from most men; the brutes don't enjoy being wanted by those they don't want! The new light had come into Muriel's feminine eyes without the aid of Fred's manly arms.

Feeling her silence, hoping he had not gone too far, he turned to her uneasily. Her quiet gaze had not left his face. Her eyes, half-smiling, fully comprehending, and altogether gorgeous, put him in a sudden

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panic. He arose abruptly. "Well, this isn't turning out pot-boilers, is it?" he said in a brisk, business-like manner. "I've got a model waiting—an expensive one. Have to pay him whether I'm there or not, you know. Thanks for the good feed."

He looked at his watch, holding out his other hand to say good-by, preparing himself for the contact.

She did not take his hand, but a light, detaining touch fell upon his arm. It made him catch his breath and recoil, tingling. He was not prepared for that. "I'd so like to pull you out of that drudgery," she said with simple friendliness—and she meant it too. She did not increase the pressure on his tense muscular arm. But she felt it quiver. "I have still another possible commission for you." With her other hand she motioned him to his chair. "May I tell you about it?"

He looked at the hand on his arm. She withdrew it. "Still another job, eh? You are something of a corker," he said with grateful admiration in his voice. But he

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remained standing. "Let me know when you land it, will you, please?" He turned to go.

"No!" she flung out.

He turned in surprise at her tone.

"Why should I?" she asked.

She had arisen, but she did not come near him. She sensed the delicacy within his physical bigness, just as she appraised the tenderness that lay unawakened beneath his assumed blatancy. It made him difficult, but therefore delectable. Once taken into camp—what a dear lover! Muriel had never experienced much kind consideration in her experiments; perhaps she deserved a little. She turned and looked out of the window. "I am anxious to help you win out, of course," she said with friendly dignity, "but, Fred, I really can't say I enjoy being snubbed every time we meet." She looked hurt, her pride offended.

"Snubbed!"

"'Let me know when you land it.'" She imitated his brusque tone and shrugged her shoulders.

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He was amazed and concerned. "But I only meant—oh, I explained all that before. Surely you understand."

"I understand perfectly! You are tired of having me around, so you use the worn out, cowardly pretext that it is making talk—as if you and I cared!"

"But it *is* making talk. I *do* have to consider such things, even if you don't."

"Yet you never come to see me here, where there need be no one to talk—no gossiping models to bear tales to other studios."

"Why, Muriel! you mustn't misunderstand things in that way! But I mustn't come here, I simply *mustn't*—and I won't; that's all." He turned to go.

"Why?"

He had no answer. "Oh, this is so unfair!" he broke out with a sweet appeal in his distressed eyes which thrilled her.

"Now don't pretend," she chided, coming nearer, "that's it's because you're afraid of *me*."

"Who said I was?" The stronger sex

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snowed its courage by drawing back a little from her advance.

"You've made that abundantly clear," she went on. "You've done nothing but laugh at me, jeer at me, calling me a *poseuse!* Oh, you've shown me what you think of me!"

"Why, *Muriel!* You know we've always slammed each other. You mustn't take it seriously, Muriel, dear."

She hesitated, uncertain what arrow to shoot next.

"I'll admit that I *tried* to have a little fun with you," she said, dropping her eyes. "I couldn't help trying to upset your statuesque calm. You don't think very badly of me for that, do you, Fred?" She looked up and smiled—almost timidly.

"No, of course not." He laughed gently at her. "But you see, my dear, you can't do it. Not with me."

"I do see it now," she answered, nodding with engaging humor. "I underestimated you. You were too much for me." She made a despairing gesture. "The joke is on

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me—again!" This time when she took a step toward him the stronger sex stood its ground. "Fred, ever since I was a little romantic fool of an impressionable girl you have been a sort of hero to me. I suppose you know that."

This arrow did not pierce his armor, but it served to make him throw it off, feeling safe. "Let's not talk rot, Muriel, dear. We're too old." He turned to leave.

"Oh," she burst out, "I don't mind your using me for your own interests! I'm only too glad to slave for you, if it will help you in your career. I want you to have success, to have everything; but then to have you despise and hate me for it!" She stopped abruptly, with something like a sob. Her dewy eyes gazed at him, her tender mouth drooped pathetically. "It's a little too much." She seemed to attempt a whimsical smile, as if bravely determined not to make a scene, but bowed her beautiful head and turned away as if defeated, he after her.

For it was a little too much for Fred too. "You don't think that of me!" he burst

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out in a panic, amazed at the indictment, his tenderest, his best sentiments now aroused. "You've been a brick! I've been a brute!"

"You have always despised me," she sobbed. "You despise me now!"

"I don't!" he cried, frantic.

"You do! I can *feel* it."

"You can't—you mustn't!"

She now retreated, he advanced.

She stopped and raised her brimming eyes to his as if to speak, but only broke down and wept beautifully—a most difficult thing to do. This arrow found the vulnerable spot, pierced him, transfixed him quivering.

"You poor little thing!" he cried in a richer, warmer voice than she had ever called forth before, and then at last she felt herself gently seized. A capable arm enfolded her pliant shoulders, and as she struggled (with such futile feminine might!) to be free of him, another strong arm imprisoned her gloriously. She heard soft murmurings. Her head sank (helplessly)

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upon his goodly shoulder, settled there, and now ceased to struggle like a captured bird. And then, with her cool hands upon his hot face, as she raised her eyes and lips to meet his frankly, he stopped—of all places to stop! "What are we doing!" he gasped, atremble. He released her as suddenly as he had seized her. "I'm so sorry!" he faltered, and turning, he stumbled out of the room, slamming the door. (She should not have ceased so soon to struggle with this predatory male.)

Was he sorry for this "poor little thing," who thought he despised her? Or, for the other poor little thing who thought he loved her. Perhaps he was sorry for both poor little things at once. Even if the stronger sex can not love two women at once surely there can be pity for more than one. The kinship may be distant enough for that.

Muriel listened a moment to make sure whether he was coming back (as they sometimes did at once) then catching a glimpse of her excited face in the mirror, she began to rearrange her beautiful and expensive hair.

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"Naughty, naughty!" she said shaking her head at the self-revelation in the glass. "That was so unfair! But he deserved it, the darling, and it will do him good."

Perhaps, though this is hardly a proper thought, it would have done him more good if he had kissed her and made a clean job of it. Still, it does not always turn out that way. . . .

"Why, I do believe," she went on, more excitedly now, though applying powder where it was needed, "he ran away in order to spare me! Oh, the dear lamb! the sweet boy! the chivalric gentleman! *He* wished to spare *me!*"

But it made her love him. And somehow it made her blush. She saw the blush in the mirror. She was touched to find that she could still blush. She loved herself for it, and loved him more than ever. She would do much for him—after he stopped running away. Tears came to her eyes. She had few illusions about herself; she feared that she would make him miserable, but she felt that she could make him suc-

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ceed. Such men need a woman for the purpose. And this one was not at present delivering lectures to ornamental slaves upon Economic Independence. The immemorial habit of the sex still persists even in the most advanced examples of the new woman. Muriel broke down and sobbed like an old-fashioned one.

Meanwhile Fred, forgetting the expensive model waiting in his studio, was gulping down deep breaths of cool, outside air, as he strode powerfully up the street toward home, his heart still clanging and echoing within him, like a fire-engine returning from a hard-won victory with the devastating elements.

He was still blinded from the smoke, confused by the clamor. He did not know how it had all happened. He only knew that he loved her now, that he must have her; only that and, incidentally—he must not! "This thing cannot go on this way! I can't keep it up." The maddening perfume of her hair still called to him insistently; the sting of her soft, scented hands

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still tingled his hot cheeks. He bit his lip till it bled.

Well, hadn't he won the preliminary skirmish with distinguished bravery? He might have plumed himself on that. He did not. There was that in him which sang pæans of victory for the vanquished side. It was the conqueror—and it was the more relentless for the temporary check. He was struggling against something stronger than he was. He wanted her; she wanted him. That supreme fact stood its ground, jubilant, exalted, god-like.

He had kept out of her way; what good had that done? She was too near, too dear. She was now involved in his work, in his life. Calls had been made at his home and returned at hers—a blinding thought. He lengthened his stride, as if to run away from it. It kept pace with him, like his shadow. He was headed for "home." So was it.

Well, since he now knew what manner of man he was, why not make a clean breast of it, let his wife know, too, what manner of

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man he was? She ought to know. Why wait, like a weakling, until in honor bound to tell? Perhaps she would help him prevent what he dreaded terribly—and desired terrifically.

Could he keep Muriel's name out of it? She had not requested him to confess for her! But even so, it would involve—why, it involved the whole world, apparently! These things cannot be individual affairs, not in gregarious existence.

The thought of deliberately informing his wife in cold blood—comparatively cold—was unspeakably difficult. But it would have to be a choice of evils in any case. He had heard of such methods of honorable procedure. The straight decency of it had always appealed to him. And to Molly. They had discussed such possibilities, of course, like all true lovers, in the simple days when he was a true lover.

But what would be the result? He knew her fine feelings, her pride. Naturally, she would not wait for the end. She would pack up and leave, like the high-minded,

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high-spirited girl he admired. He should not expect nor want her to remain. The scandal among their friends and families he did not dwell upon; mere outward respectability was an empty shell, too unimportant to be considered by those who, like Molly and himself, placed decency above decorum.

But suddenly he stopped short in his stride toward home and this honorable plan to destroy it. What would become of her? She had nothing to substitute for what he was destroying. It was so ordained for old-fashioned wives. She was dependent upon him for her status in life. She had no other reason for existence; nor even any independent means of existence, as a matter of practical, every-day fact! She was "just a wife." In effect he would be turning her out of her home, her sphere, sending her back to her father's care (some of them haven't even that refuge) in order that he might pursue the woman and the work of his choice without let or hinderance! The honorable plan suddenly took on an aspect so dishonorable that he wondered how such

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a caddish thought had dared enter his confused mind. He stumbled on mechanically, instinctively perhaps, toward his home.

There seemed no decent way to be honest, no honest way to be decent. . . .

And that is how some such nice, respectable men with high ideals learn in time to deceive their waiting wives—and even the suspicious world.

"It's this foolish little habit of confessing that causes most of the trouble in married life. It is so cruel to confess." That had been tossed out once while he was painting, and scarcely listening, by Muriel smiling idly.

IX

Alas, for the romance of passion and tragedy! Just when the stage is set for it, with dim lights and low music, some bungling player misses his cue, spoils the oft-rehearsed effect, and changes the atmosphere to plain human comedy, justly abhorred by those sentimentalists who call themselves idealists. They may be good

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themselves, but they derive delight from observing the badness of others. Well, it is, indeed, an interesting business, the most interesting in the world, since it gives a dramatic twist to what is already interesting enough inasmuch as it accounts for our being in the world. But they don't fancy the tempo or matter-of-factness of comedy. Even farce is preferred by many of them, it being pleasantly unreal, as a rule, and moving with a tickling rapidity which prevents thinking. Provided, of course, the farce be not vulgar.

The lonely, lovely, long-suffering leading lady was the one to miss her cue in this piece. She happened to be at home when her good man came in. It was too early to be busy with teas and such work. "Why, Fred dear, you have cut your lip! How *did* it happen?"

He caught his breath, making a rasping sound, as of one in great agony.

"Oh, you poor child! how it pains you!" and she insisted upon bathing it with warm water and boric acid—to prevent dangerous

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infection—although he tried to run away and vowed that it did not hurt at all, and begged her not to be concerned on his account. It was such a little thing—a mere scratch. The Carrolls always belittled their ailments to others, and "hated a fuss." There was no real damage done, he declared.

Yet she made a fuss, and filled the wifely function tenderly.

The hard walk home in the out-door breeze had aired his manly shoulders (fortunately), where Muriel's scented hair had rested. But it had not aired his mind. It was hardly a clear or a happy mind now. The civilized instincts are so inconvenient. The tender yearning pity he now felt for his wife, along with self-reproach beyond expression, surely was akin to love! Still the fact remains, that running down and severely bruising a deserving but distant kin of the opposite sex while driving your own car does not necessarily constitute a sufficient basis for a boundless passion, or even a successful marriage. Merely for boundless remorse—and perhaps an unsuccess-

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ful marriage. Love cannot be given for value received. Love is not moral nor immoral. It is unmoral.

Man, however, is moral. "I've just been lunching with Muriel Vincent," he began boldly. Was it coming?—or was he merely to make a compromise with his conscience? That sometimes helps wonderfully, as for instance when they say, "If you only knew how unworthy I am!" and then pass it off with a few vague generalizations.

"Did you have a good time?" There was nothing to learn from her tone, whatever she may have gathered from his. She and Muriel had this much in common, they both belonged to the weaker sex.

"She's secured me a commission to do a portrait. She—she's very kind and interested."

"A portrait! I'm so glad." And Mrs. Carroll added: "That's splendid. Did I tell you I had gone to call upon Mrs. Vincent?"

"She told me." There was a little pause. "The fact is, you've never mentioned her at

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all, you know—except once to speak of portraits—since you met her in the studio that day. You remember?"

It appeared that Molly remembered. "But neither have you, Fred."

There was another pause. (Hold the picture. Count five.) Each was waiting for the other. She had her reasons for making him take the cue. She was stage manager as well as leading lady in this play. She had constructed some such scene as this for days, not to speak of long nights; but comedy is delicate work and she had waited. She was still waiting.

"By the by, Molly, you and I don't look at these things in the stupid way of some people, I hope."

She had found out what she wanted—not all, but enough. She took her cue now, and her answer surprised him, but her matter-of-fact manner surprised him more. "Of course not," said Molly blithely. "A man should feel that he can have all the friends he wants—even though he does happen to be married." Then, laughing to

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cover a quaking heart, "Fred, you don't suppose I could suspect you of anything wrong! I know you too well. Though I may as well confess," and here she made a girlish grimace, "I am horribly jealous. Your Muriel is wonderful. You must cultivate her. She is coming to dinner next Thursday." For Molly herself, it seems, had also been cultivating her. And then Molly, not Fred, changed the subject gayly.

Muriel came to dinner, and smiled as she drove home. This, she thought, was merely a blind from which to watch the poaching, an old device, often employed by conventional little things. It made the game more difficult, but more interesting.

But for a conventional little thing Molly began throwing these two together a great deal, and was keeping most obligingly out of the way. "Fred hates to have me around," laughed Molly, "when he talks to women. Threesomes are always such a bore—don't you find them so?" Meanwhile, she was telling Fred that he must see more of Muriel. "It will do you good,"

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she urged with most engaging candor. "You have tried to be a stolid husband. The pose does not suit you, my dear. Let go and be yourself. 'Express your own individuality,' as Muriel calls it; 'live your own life.'" Molly's gift of mimicry at this point made Fred blush, though why should he blush for Muriel?

"Another thing, Fred," his wife added wisely, "hereafter I want you to dine at the club once a week. You are getting out of touch with your friends. You need it in your business. Oh, don't worry about me. I need it too. I'll dine at *my* club, or with my brother. Don't you think it's bad for people to see too much of each other? Especially when they rather like it. But I don't care to dine with any one person in the world every day of my life—not even witty, old dad. It's unnatural. It's wrong. It's never required, except in marriage. I suppose it's because originally people could not trust each other."

Fred laughed and almost loved her for it. It reminded him of those happy days

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which they had taken so tragically during their honeymoon, when she told him how he bored her. He had loved her for that.

After all, she was the only woman who had never "made him tired."

"What's got into you lately, Molly?" He still considered her a cunning little thing. He had much to learn about his wife. It would be interesting—if not too late.

"Oh, I've been talking to Muriel. She knows all about men." (Only a half-blush this time.)

It was not to be a noble, self-abnegating sacrifice. She felt vaguely but keenly how the land lay. Husbands deceive their wives sometimes, but themselves oftener. You don't suppose she meant to leave him now, just when he needed her most! She would stand by him for his own sake, but also for her own. For, it seemed, she too needed him most, and she meant to get him back. This could not be done in one act and a tableau. It would be a gradual process. Her expedient was the simple one of facing

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the facts of life as they really are, not as they might perhaps be in some world as yet uncreated.

She too had thought, as well as felt, about their marriage and whither it was tending—thanks to Muriel's words, whatever we may think of Muriel's deeds. She knew that he could never love Muriel, whether he did or not. She had taken Muriel's measure at a glance, and she knew this man better than Muriel did, better than he knew himself. A wife who attends to her job, summer and winter, cannot help knowing her husband better than he knows himself. She was not such an idiot as to make him fall in love with Muriel by snatching him away from her. On the contrary, she proposed to try Muriel's own receipt, convincingly outlined in her lecture, and subsequent talks: "Give a man freedom." Why not freedom perhaps to love his own wife? For his sake, as well as her own, she would not bar the cage door, but fling it wide open! Sometimes it is not the cage but the door that maddens them. Meanwhile she was preparing to get

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back in touch with his life, his work; to become a vital part of his existence, not a mere detached encumbrance, a "necessity," not a mere "luxury." Well, here was work worthy of this wife's highest talents at present. Economic, social, and political readjustments to meet changed conditions she now believed in fervently—thanks again to Muriel. But that would have to wait awhile, like most dreams. Those who care to, can laugh at her now.

This unexpected move was as puzzling to Muriel as it was surprising to Fred. Molly was taking the matter out into the light, out of the morbidness of secrecy into the free sunshine of fun and frolic; tearing off the mystery, the surreptitiousness. Would the charm go, too?

"Muriel is dying to take you on," said Molly. "She's so crazy about men." She could not restrain that soft scratch at a woman she feared and hated.

"You little cat!" laughed Fred. "Don't be silly." For a moment he felt the strange disrelish that he used to experience when

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as a boy his mother urged him to be "attentive" to the daughters of family friends. One invariably detested them. She was making him feel ridiculous—which was precisely as she intended. A man between two women is always ridiculous, though he doesn't see it. Sometimes it is dangerous to let him see it. But every man is a law unto his better half.

For Molly it was not always an easy part to play, with a smiling face and quick-beating heart. But she hoped, and kept silent, trying to believe that if she lost him by freedom he was not worth winning otherwise. Meanwhile, she had begun to insinuate herself into his work, gathering up the old threads of common interests, talking the old dear language, carefully studying the exhibitions, but keeping most of the time out of his studio.

"Fred, why don't you exhibit some of your recent illustrations in the fall when we come back?" she asked him.

Fred smiled. It was the "why trouble your little head about it?" expression.

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"Who wants to look at black-and-white?" he asked.

"Every one—at yours."

Again he smiled indulgently. Fond wives always overrated their husband's importance. It was rather cunning. "All right," he said to dismiss the subject. "I'll ask Myers if he can give me a gallery."

"Why not MacPherson?"

He smiled again. "You don't understand such matters, my dear. MacPherson wouldn't dream of taking me on."

"He told me to-day that he would," Molly answered quietly.

"What! Have *you*—why, Molly!"

But though he did not like the thought of dainty little Molly's interviewing art dealers, he could not very well refuse to exhibit at MacPherson's. And he could not help being pleased, and told Molly so, while she glowed and was glad. This was not economic independence. It was better. It was the mutual dependence of common interest. Muriel could not have done that, gloated Molly. She would not have taken

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the trouble. It was not to her interest to stay awake at night planning things to do for Fred. It was to a wife's. A wife stood or fell in the world beside her husband, as things are arranged for most of them—at present. It is still a man's world, even in these threatening days!

Oh, if she could only win back the place that she had lost! She saw now what might be done there, supplying the qualities he lacked, bringing out and guiding those he had, making herself indispensable to him, as he in turn was indispensable to her—something more substantial, this, than a pretty colored rainbow. There was no longer a chasm between them—merely a woman. Muriel must be destroyed.

To be sure, Muriel might not look at it in that way.

X

The spring came, and Molly was making herself of use to her husband in other ways than about the studio, though he no longer objected to her helping him there,

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unless it interfered with her fun. Then the "why trouble your little head about it?" attitude returned, and he bade the cunning little thing to run out and play.

As for the other matter, he could not very well take advantage of his wife's trust in him. He did not believe in himself, but so long as she believed in him there was nothing to do but behave himself. She was such a good little sport, so fair and square and unsuspecting; such a cheerful, sunny, civilized little lady, "all unconscious," so he thought, of the danger to which she was innocently, ignorantly subjecting him. But if these irresistible infatuations can be resisted while the neglected wife or husband is in the room why not also when alone at last?

For she would not let up on bringing them together! Even though he tried to make her let up—in subtle ways which would not, so he thought, arouse suspicions of his motives. Indeed, this gallant member of the stronger sex even sought refuge at times with quaint Molly by the hearthstone,

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which is sacred, even when the fireplace is asbestos. For Fred, as it happened, was not made of asbestos.

Molly now believed that she could win him back, but she would not clutch him and hold him from the other woman. She scorned capture by "the tricks of the only trade most of you have ever learned." She had learned better things from Muriel herself.

She did not propose to witness self-sacrificing and sighing, later, for what might have been; she intended to make him see that his wife was the one he loved, not Muriel. The glamour was still there, the fascination of the unknown, the unattainable. The reason so many men and women think they would have been happier married to the other one is because they never married the other one. Molly could not very well arrange a trial marriage for this pair, but perhaps that was not necessary. She evolved a plan by which, she hoped, Muriel would destroy herself—and make Molly.

The Carrolls were going off on a vacation

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next month, up in the North Woods, and they were telling their guests about it at a dinner Muriel attended, looking enigmatic and resplendent. "You see, he's never had a vacation, poor lamb, since the summer we were married. I've gone off and visited my people and his; but he has stayed on here in the heat of the city, turning out work. Even when we've been in Europe he has never got completely away from his work."

Fred smiled in a deprecatory manner, but he liked it. They always do.

"So, when he refused again this time, there was nothing for me to do but go ahead and telegraph the guides. And now he must go, whether he wants to or not."

The guests, including Muriel herself, thought they knew why he did not want to go. The cunning little wife was going to remove him from temptation. Some of the Carrolls' friends who had been looking on during the winter had remained silent, though solicitous. Others had shown their friendly interest by spreading the report,

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saying: "Where there's so much smoke there must be fire." So by this time all the Carrolls' acquaintances, and some who were not acquainted, were watching, some with alarm, others with amusement, all with relish.

Muriel, who sat very high and straight when she was dining out, smiled down upon Molly. She could not resist displaying her potency and the fear of it. "What fun you'll have! Won't you take me, too?" she asked, stepping gracefully into Molly's trap.

"*Will* you come?" cried Molly with genuine eagerness. "Oh, how nice!" And it was arranged at once between them. Fred meanwhile pretending to talk shop to the woman on his left, while he, like her, listened to Molly with astonishment.

Muriel considered it sheer bravado. The young wife wished to say to her and to the others, "See, I'm not afraid!" Muriel made up her mind to accept in earnest. She was no longer amused with the conventional little thing. She was becoming rather an-

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noyed. Molly seemed so complacently sure of her husband. And Fred seemed to be growing sure of himself again.

"You didn't mean that?" asked Fred as soon as the door closed on the last guest.

"Why not?" asked Molly guilelessly. "She's such a dear friend—of both of us now."

"*She* won't enjoy camping," said Fred scowling.

Molly knew that. It was one of the reasons why Muriel had been invited, though not the only one. "Oh, she told us when you were in the other room that she 'adored nature.'"

Fred did not laugh. For an intelligent girl, Molly seemed very short-sighted. What others thought about him had never troubled him much—perhaps not enough. But now he had a wife to look after. He did not want her friends to pity her. "Think what people will say," he reminded her reluctantly.

"Oh, but we don't look at these things in that stupid way," quoted Molly.

It would seem that her husband, how-

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ever, was beginning to look at things in a very stupid way, for he protested to Muriel herself.

"So you don't want me?" she asked standing before him, smiling.

"No, I don't want you." Why could he not shake off this sultry infatuation!

She only laughed at him. "But you do!" She reproved him delightfully, and as if to shake him (perhaps) she lightly took him by the shoulders, then stopped. "You mean that you're afraid of me!" she said in a burlesque whisper, searching his eyes.

"So you've often told me," he replied, bravely returning her gaze, but trying not to think about her.

"That settles it," she said, flushing slightly, "I'm coming. We'll see."

So she came and saw.

"My, what won't that girl do next!" asked certain of the lookers on.

"Is Molly blind?"

"No, but she can wink."

But they were only lookers on. They seldom understand.

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XI

It was the last day of Muriel's visit at the Carrolls' camp. The climate or something did not agree with her, and so she was leaving earlier than had been expected, much to Molly's disappointment, it seems. Fred, too, protested politely. In all the ten days he had never once been out of Muriel's sight. Molly saw to that.

Muriel was not at her best camping (as Molly had known). She "adored nature," but not in the raw. The only kind of camping she had ever done was at certain Adirondack "camps" which contained footmen and formal gardens. This was different. There was but one guide, an old friend of the Carrolls named John, who was willing to do anything, but expected the "city sports" to do their share. Since Muriel was a guest, Molly and Fred did Muriel's share, because she did not know much about life in the woods.

Molly did. She was good in camp. "You are the only woman I ever knew,"

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Fred had once said, "who isn't a nuisance in the woods." That was the summer they became engaged—perhaps it had something to do with their becoming engaged—and a girl does not forget much that is said to her during the summer she is engaged. At any rate, it had everything to do with their being there now, midst the poignant memories awakened by the sparkling outdoor air with the reminiscent odors of the clean pine forest. Odors are often powerful allies in certain kinds of war—where all is fair.

But camping did not seem to suit Muriel's long, attenuated style, and the sun played havoc with her beautiful nose. She could not drape herself becomingly upon the rocks, as with the Italian chairs in the soft candle-light of the studio. And the exotic perfume of her delicate presence, once so maddening to this man, now seemed rather out of place. He was a fastidious chap.

And then, too, she talked at breakfast! That was something Molly had long since

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learned would never do when Fred was around. She talked interestingly, but it wouldn't do. "See those clouds," she would say, "like disappointed hopes."

"Yes, indeed," said Fred, without looking up. "Any more flapjacks, Molly?" He was unshaven and his cravatless flannel shirt was open at the throat—a gross creature.

"'You cannot retain his interest in you,'" quoted Molly from Muriel's lecture, and giving the gross creature food, "'when you are incapable of intelligent interest in his work.'" She did it with such good-nature that Muriel laughed. She was beginning to see through Molly, but she was beginning to like her—perhaps for that reason. Worldly wise Muriel was a good sport, even if not a good sportswoman. Fred was no longer on the wing. There is such a thing as a closed season even for husbands. Could it be that this one was falling in love with his wife?

After that morning the Carrolls' distinguished guest took breakfast in her tent.

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"I am so absurdly slow about dressing, my dear, that unless it is an awful nuisance——"

"Not at all," said Molly, "Fred will be delighted to bring your breakfast to you. And he will be only too glad to get up and heat some water for you before breakfast, if you like. Won't you, dear?"

"Yes, indeed," said Fred.

But Muriel preferred to have John, the guide, perform these functions. Her toilet was complicated, and required plenty of hot water and time. (Molly understood.) So Muriel tipped John, thus hurting his feelings. John used to crouch upon his haunches before the camp-fire in the evening and gaze upon her for minutes at a time in mute contempt. He had never seen anything quite like this before. He did not care for it. Perhaps his prejudice tinged the whole camp. The prejudices of guides are apt to do that.

Fred was all right by moonlight on the lake, unless he was too sleepy after being out-doors all day, but the trouble with

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Fred was that he had not been in the woods for years and he was consumed with a barbarous lust for taking innocent life. His manner was no longer bullying with Muriel, he had become suspiciously gallant, extravagantly polite. "Oh, we are going to have a soulful time together up here," his manner said—"but just wait till I catch a two-pounder." He had once been an expert fly-caster. He'd forgotten how much he loved it. These predatory males! They love women, but battle and the chase come first; then soft femininity for the warrior's hour of relaxation. What else are they good for!

He took Muriel with him to some of the near-by streams, while Molly obligingly went far away to the good streams with John. The good streams are always far away. Muriel could not stand the journey. She did not know how to sit in a canoe, much less paddle it, and—she was bored, quite bored. She began to think she ought never to have come to this wild place. After all, the Carrolls were not her sort. They were so child-

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ish together. She was beginning to think of them as a conventional little couple after all. They had so many silly little jokes and family references. Families are such a bore.

Molly was making ready to start for Round Pond with John. "You and Muriel can guard the hearth-stone—I mean the camp-fire," she said. Fred was helping her sort out flies, enviously. Muriel was gazing out upon the lake, her hands clasped behind her head, tall, erect, enigmatic—the very pose in which Fred had painted her. "Molly," he whispered boyishly, "why can't I go along?" He hadn't had a day with her since they arrived in camp, and, as we have already remarked, he was tenderly fond of his precious if not perfect wife.

"Muriel," she replied. "Threesomes are such a bore! Besides, she could not stand the long carry."

"Why can't you stay with Muriel—just once," he laughed.

"Why, Fred, she's your guest!"

"Oh, no. You invited her."

"For your sake, Fred."

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"Well, it doesn't seem right for you to leave her on the last day of her visit. It's not nice." He said it humorously, but he hoped she would take the hint.

"Oh, you can entertain her. Talk about nature. You haven't grown tired of her so soon, my dear!"

"No, of course not," he answered—and little Molly was big enough to admire this chivalric lie. "But you see," he went on, with a frank laugh, "I've done nothing but entertain her from morning till night ever since we arrived, and now she's sick of it, and so am I! Let the poor girl have one pleasant day before she leaves! You haven't done your share. You've been skipping out and having a good time and getting all the fishing. I want some fishing too. That's what I came for, you know. It's selfish. I didn't think it of you!"

"Fred! Fred! I didn't think *this* of you! Cheer up, dear. There's only one day more, then we'll be together—alone, dear. Besides, you are going to see enough of me next winter—but not too much," she added

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to herself. "We're going to get a studio apartment and economize. You are going to swear off illustrations, and become a great painter—and so am I," she also added to herself.

When conditions fit neither the old-fashioned wife nor the new, perfectly, one must mix a little of each and compromise with conditions! Molly was efficient but no one person, it seems, can make a gregarious world over anew, and put all the reformers out of a job.

"What are you two children quarrelling about?" asked Muriel in her delightfully modulated voice, as she "swam" toward them gracefully, her hands still behind her head. "I never supposed I'd find *you* quarrelling."

At this Molly bent lower over her fly-book. "Ask Fred," she said.

"Oh, the devil!" growled Fred, and he hurried down the bank to bail out Molly's canoe.

"He's as cross as a bear to-day," said Molly, busily unreeling her line and testing

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its strength. "Do cheer him up when I am gone, Muriel. If you can't, who can?"

Fred, on the little dock, holding the canoe, watched her approach, carrying the rod which he had taught her to handle better than most men. She looked like a mere girl in her short khaki skirt as she stepped briskly toward him, supple, alert, full of verve and grace.

Ignoring the hand he held out to her, she stepped nimbly into the canoe, into the centre of it, with apparent thoughtlessness. Then taking up her paddle, as John took up his, "Good-by, my dears," she said, "take good care of each other. I'll not be back till sunset. Muriel, help yourself to my cold cream, if yours is all gone. Help yourself to anything of mine you can use," and away she went, paddling swiftly.

The two prisoners gazed after her in silent alarm, both self-conscious, dreading to meet each other's eyes, longing for cheerful Molly's return. Muriel was no longer a welcome luxury, and as Molly had interfered with her being a necessity, she had

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become disquietingly like a nuisance. To her Fred had simply become another disappointment—like all men, when once you know them well enough. Muriel was out of the procession. And yet those who only look on from the grandstand have their uses. They enjoy the advantage of perspective. Observe this young pair falling into line. Who whistled them into step? Who showed them where to march? And yet it is quite possible that they would fail to thank her! . . . Molly's canoe disappeared behind the point. The two marooned mutineers became more conscious of each other's presence. "May I not get you a sofa-cushion?" asked Fred politely.

"No, thanks," Muriel replied musically, "I must pack."

When Molly returned, the two congenial old friends were sitting side by side talking animatedly about the sunset. But she observed with a smile that there was an open book beside Muriel. And when Molly drew nearer she discovered another book, beside Fred. Well, we must all keep up

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appearances in this conventional world. But you mustn't blame Molly for abruptly running off to her tent to laugh at these respectable people.

When at last the hour of departure came, welcome to all, including John, groaning under Muriel's mountainous duffle bag, Mr. and Mrs. Carroll stood upon the little dock and waved good-by to their guest, retreating in good order, colors flying, giving and receiving little jokes as if nothing had happened; smiling inwardly at them and at herself; defeated but not depressed—and so out to view the procession once more.

When at last her canoe disappeared behind the point, Molly heard her husband breathe a sigh of relief, and she smiled indulgently, as when a mother hears her dear child waking up from a bad dream. The little comedy was ended. The field was now clear for the greater task still unfinished, to make a real union of what had merely been a marriage. It was a good place to resume, here where they had made their false start. There was much to be done, but

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she had it in her own hands now. Man proposes marriage; woman disposes of it.

Fred had turned eagerly to talk of fishing plans. But he had been arrested by the look on his wife's half-turned face. He was still gazing at it in amazement as comprehension flashed across his own. Then with the mingled sensations of a man awakening to the great fact that his wife understands him better than he does himself—alarm, respect, amusement, and solid comfort—"Molly! you little wretch!" he cried, sheer admiration for her breaking through shame and all the rest, "I see it now!"

They turned and confronted each other with new eyes, understanding and unashamed, while laughter crowded out their old polite artificiality. For him it was the moment of clear vision. He saw what a stupid thing their marriage had been, what a goodly thing it might be. And as that pleasant vista opened out before his seeing eyes the sickly half-gods took their whimpering flight with the fog and murk of illusion. Then came rushing back the God-

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given flame of love, fusing soul and senses as in the blind days before this guileless pair had lost each other's hands in the man-planted maze of marriage—but now the splendid flame surged, white and clear and unafraid. He caught his rosy mate and held her close in their mad, glad, good renewal, the tenderest of passions.

When Fred spoke it was to say: "Molly, it isn't that I was such an ass that surprises me, but that you considered me worth pulling out!"

She looked up, tender, merry, and wise. "Oh, I will always pull you out," she said.

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SECOND PART

THE HOUSE OF CARROLL

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IV

THE COMEDY OF HOME-BUILDING

SCENES: First, chiefly in the clouds of sweet illusion. Second, down to earth also sweet, but solid.

(SEVERAL YEARS HAVE ELAPSED, AND THE CARROLLS HAVE BECOME YOUNGER—AT LEAST THEY APPEAR IN A NEW LIGHT, AS TOGETHER THEY FACE THE PRESSING PROBLEM OF ESTABLISHING A NEW HOME FOR NEW CARROLLS. THEY ARE ABLE TO GET SOME FUN OUT OF IT.)

I

THEY had begun building their house together on paper years ago, before they really had any use for one, not yet being together, and discussed interior arrangements with an exterior calmness which scandalized Aunt Bella, who also was not married. She lived alone with mid-Victorian ideals in a stiff, old brownstone house which had steps leading up to a high stoop outside and silver knobs on sombre walnut doors within. She did not understand the younger generation.

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For that matter, these two members of the younger generation had not understood each other—though they thought they did—nor the building of homes, except that theirs (on this point they were clear) would be quite different from Aunt Bella's. For that is the way with home-building and younger generations, as may be learned from "The Master Builder." . . .

The wonderful house of their dreams was to be in the country—the real country, not the suburbs, though, preferably, near a golf links. It was to be long and low and lovable, rather than tall and towering and impressive. It was to cling close to the ground, but to shun the public highway. It was to nestle under a benign old tree or two which would like to have it there but would not shut out the view of the distant sea. It was to stand—or rather rest—upon a gentle terrace, somewhat run down at the edges, and to be surrounded by an old wall, somewhat mouldy in the shaded corners. Over the whole thing were to be clambering vines and the tone of time—something which

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could hardly be purchased for a new house, even if they had plenty of money. But it cost no more to dream it thus, and in time they might acquire both the house and the mellow atmosphere of home. They had plenty of time.

Being a painter, he was given to making sketches in odd moments of interesting details of the exterior—quaint doorways, with only one step up into the house; placid gable-ends, with groups of chimney-pots emerging from among the branches of the caressing trees in a manner to make one want to see the rest. (Perhaps, after all, they did want people to see their house —some people.) She, on the other hand, was not only "so artistic," as some of her friends called it, but also a "splendid housekeeper," as even those who disliked her, admitted. Why should not the two "feminine" qualities go together? Molly, at any rate, was expert at planning interiors, very practical ones, composed almost entirely of fireplaces and bath-rooms. So it is easy to see what an excellent life partner-

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ship theirs was, and they had great fun for years and years planning the house that was to be, and fighting about it but seldom.

His fun was chiefly in designing something beautiful, an ability which she could appreciate; hers the more elemental and lasting joy of home-making, a quality which he admired in women and which the biographers of bunnies and birdies would probably cite as a development of the primal instinct of nest-building. However that may be, no woman is really happy—so men have said, and men know all about them —until she has a home of her own, with babies and a lot of odds and ends to stow away in attics.

Attics and closets she dreamed about and gloated over more than any other part of the house, even more than fireplaces and bath-rooms. "It will be such luxury," she said, "after all these years of existing, not really living, in apartments at home and in trunks abroad."

So, while he in imagination was down in the wine cellar (to be constructed after an

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original design of his own) laying away Burgundy to grow old and mellow with the house and themselves, she in imagination was up in the garret laying away clothes which were already old. And while he was designing entrancing groups of low lattice windows with hollyhocks peeping in, she was planning sunny nurseries with babies peeping out.

Then together in imagination they would meet half-way—say by the broad hall fireplace—to receive a houseful of congenial guests for the week-end. The instinct of hospitality was strong in both of them, but it took a long time to agree upon the motto for the stone mantel. She wanted a line from Horace, and he wanted something modern, because so many modern guests wouldn't understand Latin.

"But we could translate it for them," she said, pushing back her pretty wavy hair soberly.

That was not his idea of art or hospitality, but he only chuckled, because Molly

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was always interesting when she said foolish things in that demure manner.

So they compromised upon a couplet in old English, though, as it turned out, there wasn't any mantel-piece in the hall, and the one in the living room proved to be of wood, and the couplet was never carved because he wanted to do it himself, but somehow or other he never got around to it. Meanwhile, before the house was even begun, some of the friends they were entertaining in imagination so lavishly died or married and ceased to be friends.

But the house continued to grow on paper, until from beginning as a modest cottage it became a mellow manor house, very simple and intelligible in its long, low lines, quite devoid of ornamentation, but beautiful in "mass and proportion." There were meandering wings running out on either side, with seeming artlessness, ending in a spacious studio at one end and a trim stable yard at the other, with a clock in the stable tower and a dovecote in the loft. There

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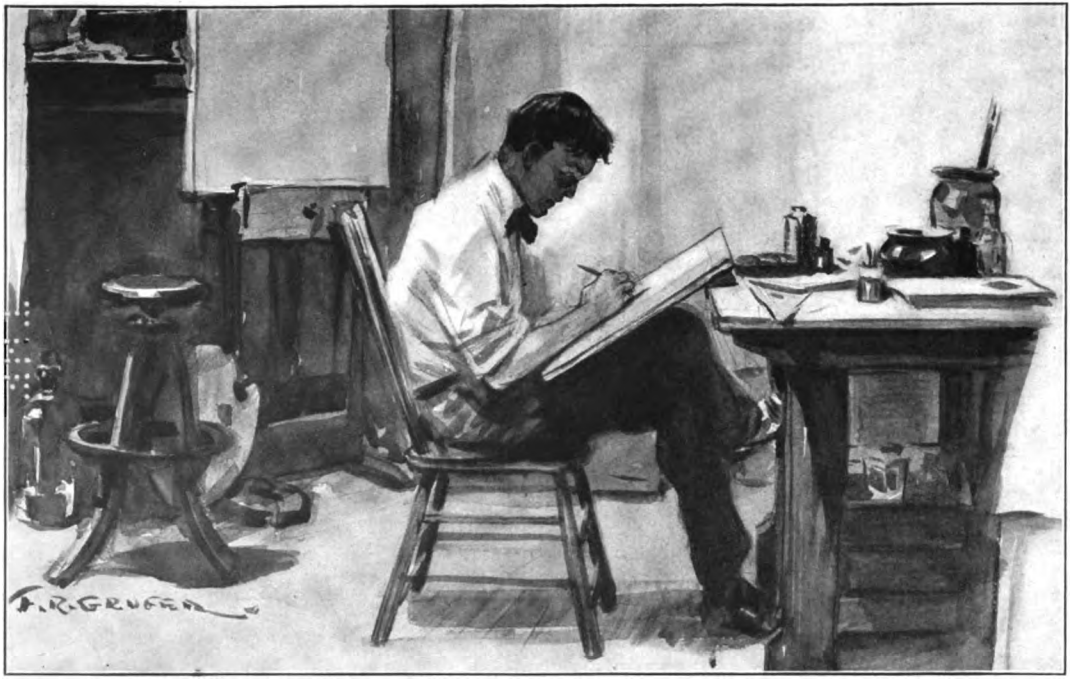

While he was designing entrancing groups of low, lattice windows with hollyhocks peeping in

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was no break in the lines; the various appendages were all held together in one pleasant, reposeful composition by an old brick wall with creamy gray stone balls on the gate posts and carelessly clustering masses of thick shrubbery, half concealing, half revealing all these charms—not to speak of the noble oak near the left-hand edge of the picture, with lower branches reaching almost across, while the upper ones soared far aloft, dwarfing the low house delightfully and making a fine effect against one of Fred's "bully, bulbous clouds." In fact, it seemed to them quite a satisfactory house, and they progressed admirably with it as long as they were left alone with their pencils and paper and paint and dreams. But one day they called in an architect.

II

Without architects and such agents of actuality, what wonderful houses—not to say castles in the air—we can all build!

The Carrolls' architect was a friend. At least he had been before he became their

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architect. That was their first mistake in trying to make their dream come true. To be sure, it could never have come true, in any case, as they dreamed it, but one should never employ a friend for an architect unless one has too many friends.

Wilson Peters was not a bad fellow, and Molly had even forgiven his having been an intimate of Fred's before marriage. That was in the old days when both men were young aspirants together in Paris, dreaming of many impossible things and some possible ones which had since come true. Fame was coquetting pleasantly with both of them now, and each had a frank liking for the other's ability, mingled with a secret contempt for what was being done with it. It seemed to Carroll that Peters was, unconsciously perhaps, allowing himself to become a woman's architect, "a man milliner," Fred called it. This architect's clever prettiness, Carroll thought, was even more criminal than the ignorant banalities of many of his trade, because of its seductive appeal to the pseudo-cultured taste of

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the new generation of American millionairesses who thought they knew architecture when they saw it because they had a speaking acquaintance with its family names, and could talk about "style" and "periods." The outward details of the real thing were always there in Peters' work (a rich riot of detail, very expensive), but the inward spirit was lacking. So Fred informed Molly, and perhaps he was right, though, like most people who build houses, he did not know as much about architecture as he thought he did.

Peters considered Carroll a pig-headed painter, "a visionary realist," who stuck to an ultra-modern school when he might have been making fame and fortune doing what people would like and buy. We have only one life to lead, and the question was whether it wasn't better to express yourself somehow or other—even in a falsetto voice—than not to express yourself at all. . . . Perhaps neither of these young men really understood the other. We'll see about that after a while.

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The architect glanced over the artist's sketches with the inscrutable look experts usually bestow upon the ideas of amateurs. Physicians, lawyers, they all have that look, especially the very young ones, when clients or patients venture suggestions. "If you only knew what I know!" it seems to say, "but I won't tell." Probably it's a professional secret. Peters said, "Umhum," and put down the sketches.

"Well," said Molly impatiently, "why don't you say they are perfectly lovely?"

Fred chuckled, to show that this was one of Molly's pleasantries.

"They are. They are, indeed!" said Peters indulgently, but he still wore the look. It was clear to Molly that this architect had no real art feeling and was jealous of the beautiful sketches. But that wasn't it. As mere pictures they had a nice feeling, the charm of a strong, simple personality. As an architectural problem they were impossible, full of incongruities, anachronisms, absurdities. But he was an architect and had learned to be tactful.

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"Of course," said Fred, "this façade may be all wrong, but, at least, we want it unpretentious. Please curb your tendency to beautify [note how tactful they both were at this stage of the game], because you aren't building for a millionaire this time."

"I thought maybe I was," said Wilson whimsically. "Have you any idea how much this outfit would cost? By the strictest economy, using the simplest materials and restraining my 'tendency to beautify' we might possibly build something of this sort for a little over double your present appropriation, but I doubt it."

Thus the house of their dreams, which had been building for years, fell to the ground in less than a minute.

It had never occurred to them to get the price of things. They only knew that houses of that sort could be bought for a song in England, shooting included. They had once rented an old one marked down to a dollar-ninety-eight, or thereabouts, a day, furnished. That was years ago, dur-

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ing their honeymoon, which now seemed roseate and beautiful, as well as amusing and absurd. But they were much younger and less serious now. . . .

There was a tense silence, despite the crashing of the walls of their sweet home. Fred took a cigarette. Molly turned her face away and almost wept. Do you wonder that they soon learned to hate their architect?

"Now, if you'll let me draw you a little preliminary sketch—" he began.

"We couldn't think of it," said Molly. "If you won't let us have that house, we don't want any! Let's not talk about it."

"Yes," put in Fred smiling, "why spoil a pleasant evening. Have a fresh cigar, Pete."

But few are ever so lucky, or unlucky, as to build the house of their dreams, and that is one reason why so many people go through life without ever building at all, forgetting that the realization of a compromise is better than no realization at all. (Perhaps there is something in Peters' view

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of self-expression.) Moreover, in the case of the Carrolls, it was no longer a mere luxurious whim for living six months of the year in the country; for there was now a worthy son of the (unbuilt) house who was already beginning to sniff contemptuously at the asphalt paths in the park, and there was a smaller Molly rapidly outgrowing baby-carriages. They wanted the country. Therefore it was not as a pretty preference that the Carrolls confronted the question, but as a judicious move for the parents of healthy children. The younger generation again, already knocking lightly at the door —down near the bottom of it; they couldn't yet reach the latch nor turn the old people out. . . . It merely meant that Frederic Carroll had postponed, for a little longer, his plan of becoming America's foremost portrait painter, and had gone in for landscapes, at which he was doing very well, to the surprise of all his friends. But that shows the advantage of being a versatile genius: The job can follow the family, instead of making the family follow the job.

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Besides, as a literary friend of Carroll's remarked, a family is better than fame, a wife than wealth, and children than a career. The famous literary friend had none of these, but Fred still had adjustable ideals. Well, surely, they are better than none at all.

Indeed, the Carrolls had bought their land, and now they felt that they must build upon it whether they wanted to or not. It was not, by the way, a farm, nor was it very far from the road. It wasn't even a road, but a street, though they insisted upon calling it a lane—a compromise in self-expression. In fact, their "land" was merely a lot on the edge of a town, but it was a most charming town, and their lot a large one, with a gentle slope to the south, and with no other houses is sight from the proposed terrace. It did not command a view of the distant sea, because the sea happened to be too distant, but there was a sweet-curving river, cutting through a waving meadow with a silver sickle; and beyond that many miles of open country

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rolled out in diminishing ripples until lost in the soft haze of a distant fringe of hills. This did not give the sharp thrill of the vivid sea, but it would do, at a pinch, as has been proved since by a characteristic and now costly Carroll, which occupies valuable space upon the already expensive walls of one of our most revered historic homes on upper Fifth Avenue, thus doing its humble part in the task of ennobling its celebrated owner, whom we shall meet and celebrate later in these veracious annals.

Architects will tell you that the lines and type of a house ought, of course, to be determined by one's site. The Carrolls had reversed this process. They had chosen this site because it suited their house!

Well, they did not like the sketches Wilson Peters drew up for them. "I'd rather be shot than live in that house," said Fred to Molly. "It's so restlessly self-assertive that it would keep us all awake at night."

"It looks like a world's fair building," said she.

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To Wilson they said, "Very pretty, but—too pretty for us. You'd better throw us over altogether. We'll only give you trouble, and it's such a small job for such a big architect."

He said he didn't want to do that—though he did—unless they wanted to throw *him* over.

They did, but only said, "Don't talk that way, Wilson!" and added, "Why couldn't you take our vague idea of a house and modify it to suit our pocketbook? There's nothing very vague about that."

Peters didn't want to do this; he wanted to "express himself," but he said he would try. He was interested in the problem; he saw more merit, to tell the truth, than he cared to acknowledge in the essentials of Fred's idea; and, besides, he liked Fred, and was beginning to like Molly.

Furthermore, he had a rough, preliminary plan for saying in the future to millionaire clients, or potential clients—millionaires being thick in the neighborhood —"Now, here's a little thing I did for

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my friend Frederic Carroll, the landscape painter—not bad of its sort, hey, what?"

"Now," said Carroll, taking out the sketches and trying to look very practical, "we don't really need the stable, because we haven't any horses, you know." It seemed reasonable to give up the stable.

"And probably never will have any after we get through building a house," said Molly. Therefore all the more reasonable. Out went the stable.

"I only put it in," explained Fred, "to make the sketch compose—but look!" he added triumphantly, and laid a book over one side of the sketch and a hand over the other. "By simply striking out both the stable and the squash court, why, you see, the thing still composes beautifully!"

"Oh, but can't we keep even the stable yard?" pleaded Molly.

"It would hardly be worth while without the stable," said Fred judiciously.

"Not even the clock?"

"Not even the clock," he pronounced

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with sternness and glanced at the architect for approval.

"You're doing well," said Peters laughing. "Is the brick wall a 'must'?"

"Don't you tear down our wall!" cried Molly. "It's so dear."

"That's just the trouble," said Peters, and told them the cost by the perch.

"Make it a hedge," said Fred, "The deep green against the house!—much more swell than red bricks."

"Now about the house itself," began the architect in a tentative manner. Both Carrolls turned upon him fiercely. He blinked and pretended to dodge. (Please note how pleasantly jocular they are together.) "I'm sorry," he said, "but your ideas are still entirely too elaborate for your appropriation."

"We call it our limit," said Fred.

"Well, you must either raise your limit or reduce your ideas. Building is twice as expensive as it used to be." (It always is.)

"I'll tell you what we'll do!" cried Molly, with an inspiration. "We'll give up the

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tiling in the bath-rooms! White enamel woodwork is just as clean and nice, and it won't crack."

The architect smiled indulgently. "That might save a hundred or two," he said grimly.

"Well, what do you propose?" snapped out Fred, fearing the worst.

"Long, low rambling houses are very interesting to look at," began Peters, "and I assure you," he added hastily, "much more fun for the architect, but——"

"Now he's going to pull down even the house!" cried Molly aghast.

"No," laughed Peters, "only to build it up a little. For one thing, your plan would require at least three furnaces, since you insist on hot air."

"But look at all our lovely fireplaces!" said Molly.

"Yes, look at them! Scattered out all over the place. Let me see, you'd have to build six chimneys. Chimneys cost money. Likewise with your bath-rooms; you've got your plumbing system spread out to the

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four winds. Plumbing is expensive. Besides, some of your pipes would freeze. Did you ever stop to think of that?" (No, they had never stopped to think of that.) "Then, heavens! all these corners; corners are costly. I'm afraid you'll have to concentrate your house a little. In fact," he paused to deliver the cruel blow, "I'm awfully afraid that you'll have to lift up this wing and plunk it down on top of the other one and—throw away the middle." Once more he burlesqued warding off a blow.

This time the Carrolls did not laugh.

A high house after all! That was a little too much.

("He's a facetious little man," thought Molly. "I never did like him.") Fred remained silent and avoided his wife's eyes. Peters made use of the silence to rush in upon them while off their guard; so unsportsmanlike. "Then, again, take this long roof. Tile is very interesting, and takes a nice color, but did you ever price it?" (No answer.) "It's not only expen-

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sive in itself, but you'd have to increase your supports beneath in order to sustain the tremendously increased weight. Ever lift a tile and a shingle?"

A deeper silence.

"Oh, of course," growled Fred, "everything we want we can't have."

"And everything we *can* have we don't want," sighed Molly.

That was the way it seemed at the moment, but when they recovered from the first blow they decided philosophically that a great many of the things they couldn't have they really did not want. "Billiard tables are always hideous, no matter who designs them," said Fred, "even if they did not eat up space. I can play at the club."

Perhaps that was the reason Molly wanted it, but she let it go. "And I don't really need a sewing room. The nursery will do perfectly well," she said.

"And we can cut out a guest room or two. They are a nuisance to take care of with so few servants. When we have a house full of people we can utilize divans

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in the studio and so on for sloppy bachelors, like Pete."

"And a reception room is a stiff and useless formality. That secluded window niche in the hall will do."

So the process of elimination went on until the house shrank to about half the size of the dream house. But there was one thing they would not give up, and that was the low, caressable effect of the exterior. It wouldn't seem like a home if it were high and conspicuous, they said. The house was now reduced to sixteen rooms, including the hall and the laundry, and few of them very large rooms at that; but then none of the charming rooms at Mount Vernon are large, and if the father of his country enjoyed small rooms, probably the father and mother of the Carroll children could do so too. Well, being small, the rooms could stand low ceilings—they had wanted low ceilings all along—and, as it turned out, the experienced architect found a way of making the third story look merely like a roof, though it really contained, most

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surprisingly, three servants' rooms, a good-sized bachelor guest room, a bath-room, and two large attics for Molly to revel in. So they had their long, low effect and yet had only one furnace—a big one, school-house size—and concentrated plumbing. This was very clever of Peters, and they really began to respect him a little. Architects, it seems, have the qualities of their defects.

They now thought they had their dream reduced to the lowest common denominator with reality.

"You will still have your fine roomy studio on the north," said Molly. "That's the main thing."

"And you, the big sunny nursery on the south," said Fred. "*That's* the main thing."

"You can still have your wine cellar," she added.

"Yes, even if there's no wine in it. And you can have an attic and lots of closets."

"Even if we have to sell our clothes to pay for them," remarked his frugal wife.

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"And you can have your garden with a pool to reflect the sunset, below the terrace," pursued her generous husband.

"Even though we have no gardener. And you can have your tennis court below the garden," returned Molly.

"Even though I'll never have time to play on it," laughed Fred.

Moreover, it was going to be a very comfortable and rather distinguished little country place, they believed, with plenty of open fires (six were plenty) and pleasant proportions—thanks to "only a slight increase" in their appropriation. The lines were to be simple and dignified; the effect placid and unstrenuous—thanks to a few mild scraps with Peters. For when it came to drawing up the working plans in scale, he could not resist "featuring" chimneys and things, "expressing himself in his work," he called it, with proper professional pride.

"Suppose you express *us*," said Fred. "We've got to live in the thing. You can express yourself in your work for the Harrison Wellses. They don't live in any of

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their houses. They merely stop in them for a few weeks at a time."

"Fred," said Wilson, "I take off my hat to you as a painter, but when it comes to architecture—well, you don't understand my 'Art.'"

"There's something in that," admitted Fred with a smile. "But, Pete," he galloped on, for his favorite hobby had been pricked, "I understand enough about art in general to know that beauty is a thing that comes out of itself—a sort of by-product in the pursuit of something else, truth, maybe. It just dawns. It can't be stuck on, Pete. Not even by as clever an architect as you." Wilson looked bored. Carroll laughed and dismounted, saying, "Besides, this is a poor man's house; why not let it look like it—'poor but honest.' Why take the trouble to put on lugs? I don't care in the least to throw a bluff before the world. Why should I? The measure of success in my trade is not the amount of money I make."

"Gee!" laughed Wilson, passing it off

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lightly, "I used to think it pretty fierce to build for Philistines—but a painter's the limit!"

Then they both laughed and parted without blows, but it did not augur well for the future.

III

Now a decisive moment arrived.

"I've estimated pretty carefully," said Peters; "it just about scrapes under your present limit." He laughed engagingly.

The precious plans (in blue print) and the indexed specifications (a long, typewritten document, neatly bound and most impressive to Molly) were intrusted to five contractors, and in the course of time their bids came in.

"I've got bad news for you," said Wilson, as if trying to break it gently. "I thought surely we had the thing scaled down to our figure, but—" he quietly held out the list of bids. The lowest was nearly fifteen per cent. above their "appropriation." And yet Peters had laughed at the

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painter for not being practical. Perhaps the architect had made some mistake in his estimates. We all make mistakes.

There was a moment's painful silence, the library clock ticking on industriously, as if quite confident of being housed in any case.

"Isn't it fierce, the way building materials keep soaring?" asked Wilson.

There was no reply. Fred was thinking that Peters, as a practical man, ought to keep a little better track of the soaring uplift. But he did not like to say so to an old friend, and before Molly. She had taken a woman's unaccountable prejudice against him, as it was.

"Oh, of course!" sighed Molly at last. "We might have known it." She had suspected Wilson from the start. There was now no doubt in her mind about his treachery.

"What's to be done?" broke out Fred, scowling. "What else can we scale down?"

The architect shook his head. "I don't think it will stand much more simplifica-

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tion," he said. "It's either this or begin all over again, with a different idea, a new plan entirely."

"But we must have a house to move into next fall!" cried Molly excitedly. "Would there be time to plan another?"

"Maybe," said the architect slowly.

"Think how we've worked over this one all winter," sighed Fred.

"I know it," said Wilson. He, too, had taken pains—with the plans, whether with the prices or not.

"Besides, this is the house we *want!*" said Molly. "It suits us, it's grown into our hearts. It would be like losing a child."

"I'm sorry," said Peters, though he was a bachelor.

There was a pause. Molly and Fred exchanged glances.

"Perhaps I'd better go," said Peters, tactfully appraising the look. "I don't want to influence you one way or the other," he said, turning at the door; "but there's one thing worth considering: Brixton Brothers

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—the ones who made the lowest bid—often take jobs on a percentage basis with an upshot figure. It saves the owner considerable money sometimes."

The Carrolls did not know what a percentage basis meant.

"Why, simply this: They agree to put up a house according to the plans and specifications for what it costs to build, plus ten per cent. for their profit, and agree that the total expense won't be more than a certain figure. Their upshot figure in this case would be this amount they have bid. Think it over."

Well, they thought it over.

Now, it had been Fred's original intention not to touch any of Molly's money when it came to building a house. A part of his dream was to pay for the whole thing himself and then have the fun of deeding it over to her grandly. But that was ages ago, before they consulted an architect.

"Since we've already touched it," said Molly convincingly, "why not touch it some more? We'll probably never build

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but once, so let's build what we want in the way we want it. Do let's avoid saying afterward, as Uncle Will does, and every one else we know who ever built a house, 'Now, if I were building over again I would do thus and so.'"

"It is true," said Fred thoughtfully, "that most people have to enlarge their houses after a few years, and that usually spoils the symmetry. But I won't use any more of your money," he added firmly.

"You needn't," said Molly. "I won't let you. I'm going to use it myself. You have nothing to say about it." She knew how much he wanted the house as designed, so she based all her arguments on how much she wanted it. That was the way to work them.

"To be sure," mused Fred, "it isn't as if we had to keep on paying studio rent. Our house would be a workshop as well as a home. But——"

"Of course, if it's big enough," interrupted Molly. "Therefore, we must have it big enough or it can't serve both pur-

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poses—and so we couldn't save money, you see!"

"But, all the same," maintained Fred doggedly, "if I can't pay for it, I don't deserve such a fine house."

"But *I* do," said Molly, looking very piquant and adorable. "Why make me suffer for your sake? You want all the fun of designing the house and paying for it too. I think I have *some* rights." She was so droll and pretty as she said this that Fred laughed from sheer joy of her, as she intended he should, and leaned over and kissed her, as she hoped he would.

"But we mustn't think of it," he said, sighing. . . .

But, naturally, that is just what they kept on doing, with the not very surprising result that within twenty-four hours they had signed the contract to build the wonderful house on the promising percentage plan, with the seductive hope that the contractors would kindly save them enough to justify their recklessness.

As soon as they had taken the decisive

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step, they felt a sudden wild joy in their act. They stopped worrying over whether they could afford it or not. Wisely or foolishly, they were going to have a place in the country! A house all their own; built expressly for them; modelled on their own ideas! A home for the children to grow up in, for themselves to grow old with!

Their dream was coming true at last.

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V

THE DREAM HOUSE—AND THE NIGHTMARE

SCENES: On the Carroll estate and on the Carroll nerves.

(A CONTINUATION OF THE ABOVE, AND A CONCRETE EXAMPLE OF THE INSIDIOUS DELIGHTS AND DANGERS OF BUILDING CASTLES IN THE AIR—WITH ITS AMUSING REACTIONS UPON THE CARROLLS, WHO ARE FOES OF COMPROMISE.)

I

THE Fred Carrolls had observed that the erection of State capitols, Carnegie libraries and other important edifices was inaugurated with a formal ceremony called, "Turning up the first sod." Therefore, since their house in the country was to be an important edifice, they decided to have a ceremony.

So when at last the great day in their history arrived, toward which years of dreaming and designing had carried them, they

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honored certain intimate friends and relatives with an invitation to witness the turning up of their first sod by the Carrolls' first-born, appropriately dressed in his blue jumpers—which seemed more suitable to him and to digging than the frock coat and silk hat generally worn on such occasions by his fellow turners-up of first sods. Since he was the chief cause of their going in for building a little country place, instead of waiting until they could afford a big one, it was no more than fair that he should do this much of the work.

But when it came to the formal moment he selfishly refused to see it in that light. He liked the nickel-plated spade well enough, except for the ribbons, but it seemed that he was not given to digging before audiences. He never had done that sort of thing and he never would. He was a conservative, like a true Carroll. Perhaps that was why Aunt Bella beamed upon him. But though his greatly adoring great-aunt was telling him how much like an angel he looked in his darling little overalls, his re-

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spectful uncles focusing cameras upon his darling little curls, his sentimental grandparents reminding him that it would be such a nice thing to recall in after years, he declined to proceed with the ceremony. (No wonder.)

In short, he threw up the job, threw down the spade, and took refuge under the automobile which had brought him out into the country. He had long intended to do a bit of original research there anyway, and from this greasy retreat, whence no one could conveniently yank him, he made it quite clear that he did not care a hang whether he ever had a nice house for baby to play in or not, and refused to come out until bribed with a box of candy. Thus, at the very start of their building operations, the Carrolls had a strike on their hands.

However, the guests, except Aunt Bella, enjoyed the champagne in which the building operations were toasted, especially the bachelors, who had no houses or children to bother with, and they joked Fred upon the conduct of his progeny; and the house was

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begun, at any rate. That was the main thing.

It was actually begun! With men and teams digging up the ground in a most oblivious, business-like manner, quite as if it were to be a real house—but it was! And that seemed the most astonishing thing about it. This house was no longer to be merely on paper. It was to sprout up from the ground and grow and find itself and become a home, a real home for people to live in, for children to be reared in; a scene for weddings and funerals perhaps; a background for memories, good times and bad times, the humdrum happenings of daily existence, as well as more vivid experiences occasionally, which together make the sum of life and cause houses to be so much more personal and important than mere edifices of sticks and stones and brick and plaster.

Well, now that work was actually begun, the Carrolls, who in their enthusiasm had rented a place near by, believed that their troubles were over at last. All they had to do now was to lean back and watch

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the beautiful thing grow—just as they had taken for granted at "the" wedding, years ago, that nothing could ever make much difference to them again, nothing in life could ever come between them, because at last they were together till death.

How many innocent home builders have made the same mistake! Their real troubles had only just begun. Also their real fun, for that matter.

II

For a while it grew with astonishing rapidity. The wonderful cellar was excavated with the greatest ease and hardly any occasion for blasting. "That means," said Fred enthusiastically, "that we are saving money! Blasting is very expensive. The contractor says he figured on blasting in his original bid. Weren't we clever to build on a percentage basis? Bah! We can be as business-like as anybody when we make up our minds to it. It's only that, usually, there are more important things to think about."

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"Yes," said Molly; "only, do you think it necessary for them to—do *that* so often?" She indicated a workman spitting impiously into their cellar. Apparently the workman failed to realize that this was potentially a lady's house. But copious spitting seemed to be a necessary accompaniment to honest workmanship, and so the Carrolls generously overlooked it in the joy of their sense of possession. Here was a visible, tangible piece of the world, all their own.

"Let's take a stroll over the estate," Fred would say grandly.

"Shall we cross the moors to-day?" Molly would ask. That was the level plot where the tennis court was planned. "Or wander down to the game preserve?" That was the south-east corner of the lot where the bushes were thick. They also possessed a copse, it seemed, but there were no fens. It was too bad about the fens, but they couldn't have everything. If they had everything they would miss the luxury of desire, and that would be the worst thing in the world.

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For the most part they lingered near the hole in the ground where the house itself was going to be, each thinking how it would gradually dawn upon them, like one of Fred's carefully studied portraits. Besides, it was interesting, as holes go, and Fred pronounced the excavated earth of a swell color. He took a clod of this swell dirt back to his studio in town and asked some of his friends if they did not think it swell. They said they did.

But there was one thing which troubled them both at this time, though each, hoping that the other did not notice it, kept silent about it, after the foolish manner of many married people, especially young ones. They feared that some dreadful, irreparable mistake had been made; the outline of the house as shown by the foundation was so disillusionizingly diminutive. Such is always the effect, of course, at this stage of house building, but no one had prepared them for it, as is the case with many unnecessary little disillusionments in life which would not hurt so if only the

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older generation took the trouble to explain to the younger generation in advance. Perhaps they consider it "destroying the ideals of youth." Perhaps they merely forget.

Well, it got on Molly's nerves so badly one night that she could not sleep. So, arising at dawn, she dressed quietly and tiptoed down-stairs so as not to disturb Fred in the next room. Then, having spent five minutes in a vain search for the long tape measure (already purchased for marking out the tennis court), and finally compromising with her ideal upon a short one, old-fashioned and well-worn, in the sewing-machine drawer, she crept stealthily out of the house and across the dewy lawn to measure that foundation and settle the matter once and for all. But when she arrived at the scene of disillusionment, there was Fred, leaning over, absorbedly measuring the foundations with the long tape measure.

"What are you doing?"

"What are *you* doing?"

"Nothing."

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"Nothing."

Each looked at the other's tape measure, and then at the other's eyes a moment, and burst out laughing. Wilson Peters, the architect, arriving that day, put their minds at rest by explaining the optical illusion.

Lumber arrived, a gang of carpenters came, the heavy timbers were set up, the frame of the house fairly flew together, like Wendy's house in the second act of "Peter Pan." With the merry music of rhythmic hammering, the delightful odor of clean lumber, not to speak of the prospects of limitless kindlings for the new house, these were happy days.

"You're going to have a mighty tight, well-built house, Mr. Carroll," said the contractor's superintendent.

"We believe in having 'em tight," nodded Fred, with a wink at Molly, who was smiling at his attempt to sound practical.

"At the present rate," said Wilson Peters, who seemed to be paying particular attention to this job; "at the present rate, your house ought to be turned over to you

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by September first." That meant a month ahead of the contract.

"Nothing like having a friend for your architect," said Fred to Molly.

"Yes, he takes such a personal interest!" said Molly to Fred. But how could he help it, they both thought. Houses like this weren't built every day.

When the ridge-pole was erected, there was another ceremony, a treat for the workmen, called, "topping the cedar brush." The Carrolls, having become landed proprietors, believed in encouraging these quaint old guild customs. It took place on a Saturday half-holiday. One of the men climbed up and nailed a young cedar tree to the end of the ridge-pole. Thereupon a keg of beer was opened, which Fred had ordered for them, along with a box of cigars and an enormous number of sandwiches. It was served in the dining-room, or what was eventually to be a dining-room. "Here's to Mr. Carroll," said the superintendent, raising a foaming beaker; "may he live long and be happy in his new house!"

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Fred didn't feel so much like a landed proprietor when it came to making a speech, but he said he was very glad to have as his first guests in the new house the men who were building it, and building it so well. He told them how much he respected honest workmen who took a pride in their work. Then, fearing lest this sounded patronizing, he added that he knew what he was talking about, because he, too, toiled with his hands and knew the joy of "making things come out the way you want them to."

They thought his hands didn't look much like it, but didn't mind his thinking so if he wanted to, and considered him all right for setting up the beer, especially as he straightway departed and left them to the unconstrained enjoyment of it.

III

After this came a period of stagnation Molly said the beer must have made them logy. The frame, having shot up like a mushroom, now hesitated as if wondering

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what to do next. Finally the work stopped altogether.

"Another damn strike," said the superintendent. "They were planning it while drinking your beer in your dining-room, Mr. Carroll. Don't talk to me about the honest workman and his pride in his work. Huh! The only pride they take is in the amount of work they can get out of doing. I've had twenty years' experience and I *know*."

"Is that why they got indignant when my servants gathered up some of those odds and ends for kindling the other day?" asked Fred.

The superintendent smiled. He had heard about the kindling episode. "Well, you see, it's a sort of permitted graft in the trade for the foreman to have all that. They consider it their right."

Here was another fine old guild custom to be encouraged by landed proprietors.

"Yes, I noticed that he brought a horse and wagon here the next day," said Fred, "and carted it off right under my eyes. I

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merely have the ancient proprietary privilege of paying for it, I suppose." The privileged class seldom sympathizes fully with the proletariat.

The strike was finally adjusted, and Mr. Carroll was assured that the house would be turned over to him "soon after" the middle of October. (That, he learned later, is one of their favorite expressions.) "Why, we're just as anxious as you are to check this job off," they assured him plausibly. (That is another.)

Then later it was "a mistake in some of the material. We had to send it all back. It isn't our fault." It never was, apparently, the fault of any one visible.

Meanwhile, Peters, who in the earlier stages seemed almost as keen as the Carrolls themselves, gradually manifested less interest in their house, now that he had had his fun out of designing and starting the thing. He was given to telling them at length about this and that important competition he had won, while they wanted him to talk about their own important house and

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to rush it through so they could live in it next fall. The lease on the place they were occupying expired on October first. They had confidently declined to extend it to November first when they had the chance. ("Oh, no, we'll be living in our *own* home by that time!" they had remarked.)

"Look here," said Fred to the architect, "we appreciate that you are pretty busy just now with all these more important undertakings; what would you say to getting a superintendent to oversee our work? That's often done, and I'd gladly pay for his services. These contractors have to be watched all the time. I'm convinced that they are skimping our work. I told you how I caught them leaving out the deafening paper between the floors."

Peters did not like this. His professional pride was touched. "Well, didn't I make 'em rip up the floor and put it in?" he asked. "No, I'll superintend my own work, Fred. That's what you're paying me for, old chap. They can't fool *me*. They all say I have an eye like an eagle. Look at

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your concrete floor in the cellar, for instance. Didn't I make them rip it out, the whole thing? Didn't I jump all over them?"

This was true; he had made a most interesting fuss over that, but it was also true that, as the house was being constructed on a cost basis, the owner would have to pay for that extra work. But Fred didn't like to remind Wilson of things of this sort; it was so distasteful. Besides, Fred had been gathering in such whacking large prices for his canvases lately—so what was the difference!

The architect's visits became less and less frequent, more and more hurried. He kept the carriage from the station waiting while he stalked through the house in a blustering manner, scowling and swearing occasionally, as if to impress Fred with his thoroughness, then was off again to the train in a great hurry, both vehicles to be charged to travelling expenses in his bill to the Carrolls.

In justice to the architect it should be stated that the Carrolls' house had reached

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a stage where such constant attention was not necessary, but the Carrolls did not think so. They had never built a house before, and it was something like their first baby; they had wanted the doctor to spend all his time with them. So Molly now declared that she never *had* liked that man and told Fred that he ought to write and prod him up for neglecting them so. "This is a business relationship, and you mustn't let your friendship stand in the way. You owe it to your wife and children to have this house well built," she urged shaking her pretty head.

"You'd think," swore Peters to his partner when the letter came, "that I had nothing to do but watch the driving of every nail in that one little house! It's becoming a nuisance."

But he ought to have been used to it. That was usually the way. Each home builder thinks his house the most important one in the world. So it is, to him.

Then, having finished swearing, Peters wrote a lovely letter telling them he "knew

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exactly how they felt about it," or rather, he called out to his stenographer, "Give them Jolly Number Two, and add that I'll be there to take up all these matters in detail next Tuesday."

"Did you say Thursday, sir?"

"Either will do—just so you remember to follow it up with a telegram postponing my visit on account of an important conference in Boston."

Meanwhile there had come the question of "extras." The Carrolls, like many innocent home builders, thought that the contract price—in this case, the "upshot figure"—covered everything necessary for a home to live in except the furniture. The furnace was extra, the kitchen range was extra, the electric light fixtures were extra, even the mantel-pieces were extra. But, in addition to these necessary extras, there were many others very desirable—a glass enclosure for the covered veranda in cold weather, a latticed enclosure for drying the clothes, adjoining the laundry and incorporated with the lines of the house. "As

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long as we can't have a stable and a stable yard," said Fred, "we can at least use a drying ground. That will help the long, low effect and let the house down easily on that side."

"And keep us from washing our dirty linen in public," said Molly.

They denied themselves the extravagance of spending five dollars on the theatre one evening, and cheerfully agreed to five hundred dollars' worth of extras the next morning. When you are spending thousands such amounts are mere trifles.

But Molly had become convinced that Peters was "working" Fred. "Every one does, you know. You are always so guileless and good-natured with your friends." (And yet this man thought he had an original wife!) "Wilson knew you could never resist the color of that dreadfully expensive imported tile for the fireplaces."

Fred laughed at her. But upon thinking it over, he concluded that he was, perhaps, a little too good-natured (an original husband also, you observe), and after brood-

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Then the architect wrote the Carrolls a lovely letter, or rather, he called to his stenographer, "Jolly Number Two!"

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ing over it awhile became quite indignant over the matter; would not let *anybody* impose on *him*, old friend or not, etc.

The situation meanwhile had become this: work on the interior was almost at a standstill; the contractor swore he could not proceed a step further until he received the "detail" from the architect; the architect swore he could not supply the detail (designs for the trim) until the owner passed upon them; the owner swore he could not O. K. them when they were so damned fancy. (They had all reached the swearing stage by this time.)

"For Heaven's sake," he demanded of Peters, "why can't you do something simple and unassertive! This is neither a barroom nor a barber shop."

"No," snarled back Peters, horribly insulted, forgetting at last to be suave, "but it would be a *barn* if I let you have your way."

"Well, I'd rather have a barn than a bird-cage!" returned the owner. "Some of the most charming houses in this whole

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nouveau riche country of ours have been made out of *barns*," he went on, taking the matter seriously; "*charming*, I said, not *impressive*," with tremendous scorn. "That seems to be your chief asset as an architect—to make everything look as expensive as you know how, with your silly little Renaissance dib-dabs, your barroque redundancy, and all the rest of your esthetically impoverished but blatantly pecuniary canons of taste." Fred was one of the exasperating kind who become low-voiced and long-sentenced when aroused.

"Taste!" roared the incensed architect, "when it comes to a matter of *taste*, I guess my standing in my profession——"

"But I'd like to know," interrupted the painter calmly, "whose profession is to be represented in this house? Whose taste ought to be considered here anyway?—yours or mine?"

"It happens to be *my work!*" shouted the architect.

"It happens to be *my house!*" whispered the owner.

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A pause, both glaring.

"Well, then, why did you call me in if you don't like my ideas?"

"Simply to carry out my own ideas. I've taste enough myself."

"Yes, 'lots of taste,'" quoted the architect with a sneer. "'Some of it good.'"

At this point entered Mrs. Carroll, looking very sweet in her new calling costume and feeling the peace with the world which comes only from making half a dozen calls upon people who are out. Seeing how crestfallen the architect looked and knowing how dreadful it was to suffer Fred's disapproval, she sprang to the rescue of the situation with a woman's unerring tact.

"Oh, Wilson," she said in her most gracious manner, "I think you are doing wonders with our house. It is so dignified and restrained."

Wilson shot a look of restrained triumph at Fred, and made a dignified exit, pleased with her and himself. "Little Mrs. Carroll is a corker," he remarked that evening

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in town; "but Fred's the limit. No more crazy artists for me!"

Meanwhile, Fred was taking it out upon his tender, tactful wife. "That's right, egg me on, get me mad, make me jump on him, and then come in and praise everything in sight!" And so to the logical climax of tears, retractions, kisses, forgiveness, and finally laughter, which might well have come first and saved that much expensive emotion.

Well, in the end they did have Wilson's trim—and trimmings—which he pronounced simple because inexpensive, and which Fred considered evil because it tried to look expensive. But he had had his own way about so many things that, in order to restore pleasant feelings, he gracefully yielded even to the little Renaissance dib-dabs Wilson enjoyed sticking on under his mantelpieces. Most of them dropped off, anyway, when the heat was turned on.

Thus the comedy proceeded.

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IV

The house had been promised for October the first. Was ever a house finished on schedule time, or for the estimated price? (Yes. It has been known to happen; but this was to be a typical experience!)

By the middle of November the Carrolls had visited all their available relatives (who would have enjoyed "the Freds" more if they had only talked about "our house" less). The house was still "not quite finished." So they conceived the idea of moving into it without waiting for it to be finished, and remarked, originally, as impatient home builders always do in taking this step, "That is the only way to get the workmen out."

"And I can keep those blamed painters from bungling the color of the woodwork," said Fred. "Since that man Peters absolutely declines to attend to his business, I suppose I'll have to do it myself."

"And I can see that we get the shelves put up in the bath-rooms. *He* will never remember it."

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So, upon a bright November afternoon the Carroll family moved into the upper stories of their newly painted house. "It's like camping out," suggested Molly, trying to seem cheerful.

"Yes, with all the discomforts and none of the charm," growled Fred, awakened early by the banging and scraping of the finishers.

"I wouldn't mind that," said Molly, "if only the painters wouldn't whistle when Babs takes her nap."

"It's probably one of their ancient customs," Fred reminded her.

However, the studio was in shape for use—and there was the best of reasons for industry now—but, unfortunately, the former superintendent had gone to a more important job, and the contractor had put in charge of finishing the Carroll house a red-cheeked youth just back from Paris, who could draw pretty pictures of cathedrals, but knew nothing about screwing on back doors. So while Fred was trying to earn money to pay for the extras, this young

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man would enter without knocking (no one knocks on unfinished doors) and ask Fred's confidential advice about hanging window weights. He did not dare ask the men, for fear they would laugh at him. Finally Fred became desperate. "See here," he began with slow, drawling sarcasm, "I would like to teach you your job if I had the time and understood your job. But as I'm almost as ignorant as you are, and as I've got to pay for your work whether I do it for you or not, don't you think it would be rather nice in you to give me a chance to earn enough money for the purpose? Think it over and let me know."

The youth blinked at this complicated subtlety, and departed. He never bothered Fred again, but every time they met on the stairs he blinked.

But the longer the house remained nearly finished the longer it took, apparently, to finish it.

Finally the Carrolls ceased to make sarcastic remarks about it. It no longer seemed funny. It became the greatest mis-

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take they had ever made in their lives. They tacitly agreed to ignore the once absorbing topic, as though it were a skeleton in one of their unfinished closets. And if the architect or builder presumed to call upon them in regard to the coloring of the woodwork or the arrangement of electric bells, they flew into a rage and insulted him. "How dare you mention such a thing in the presence of my wife and myself!" Fred's manner seemed to express. Yet if the architect or builder dared to go ahead without consulting them they flew into another rage. The house was on their nerves.

One day a young couple, in whom the Carrolls had previously manifested the benign interest which those happily married are apt to bestow upon those trying to be, came to call and announced innocently that they too were thinking of building in the spring. It was said with almost the same confident joy with which they had once announced their engagement (saying "we want *you* to know it among the first.") But instead of the enthusiastic congratulations

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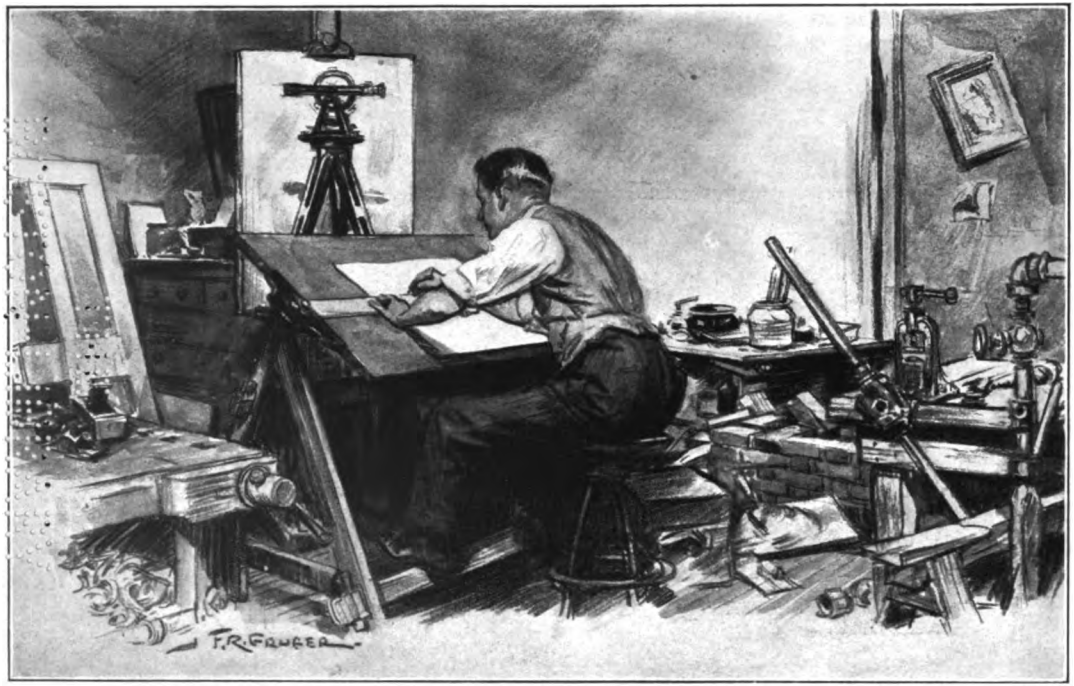

The house was on their nerves

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they had expected from such nice, generous-minded friends, Molly sighed and said: "Oh, I am *so* sorry," and Fred took the young man apart and whispered in a tragic tremolo, "For God's sake, my boy, think! —think what you are doing!

"There is only one satisfactory way to build a house," he went on, quite in earnest, apparently. "First become an architect for several years, then a practical builder for several more, then learn each of the building trades in turn until you become a master of all of them; after that, if you have plenty of born executive ability and a good deal of bull luck, you may possibly get what you want, built in the way you want it—if it's a house you require by that time and not a mausoleum."

This was while the Carrolls were living, at great expense, at the inn, and daily postponed moving to a less costly boarding place because it was hardly worth while moving when the house was "so nearly" finished.

It was not because the children played with the floor planers' tools, nor yet en-

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tirely because the smell of fresh paint made them ill, that the Carrolls had finally given up the fight and decamped. It was because of the construction of the furnace fresh-air flue. The hot and cold water pipes ran along the cellar ceiling at right angles to the direction of this proposed flue on the blue-print. Therefore, one day when Fred wasn't watching, the honest workmen desirous of that "joy of making things come out the way you want them to," thoughtfully built a fresh air box with the pipes running through it, thus subjecting them to a temperature a little colder than out-of-doors. With the third week of December came a cold snap. Result—unnecessary to describe, also impossible. . . .

In after days, when the house found itself and became a joy to them; when, covered with vines and the tone of time, it rested innocently upon its placid terrace with the guileless expression of a child peacefully dreaming in its cradle, little knowing how it had caused a brave woman to weep, a strong man to swear—in those

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serene after days the Carrolls sometimes inquired of friends who came to visit them there if they, too, had ever gone through the ordeal of house building. And if, perchance, the answer was yes, there straightway sprang up a strong bond of mutual interest and sympathy—as with those who also had little dears, at home—and they looked upon one another with a new understanding. They, too, had been through it. They, too, had suffered. They, too, knew the joys, the sorrows, and the sacrifices.

This is anticipating, but without anticipation even worse ordeals than mere house-building would prove unbearable. . . .

After rescuing his family from the "not quite finished," but now quite flooded house (for, of course, the frozen water pipes burst), Fred called a conference of the powers. He spoke well-chosen words to them. They were chiefly of quaint Anglo-Saxon origin.

The architect dropped his eyes and agreed with everything the owner said, but blamed the general contractor. The general contractor blamed the plumbing con-

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tractor, the latter the youthful superintendent, etc., as usual, all down the line.

It was a long wrangle, and it was getting nowhere. Meanwhile time was flying. Suddenly they were all interrupted by the owner hammering upon the unfinished book case for silence. "Gentlemen," said Carroll with the sanctified calm of one who is beyond emotion, "you are all mistaken. It's not his fault, nor his, nor *his*," pointing to each of these practical men. "It's all *my* fault, for being fool enough to build a house. Now that point is all settled, suppose you get busy and 'check off' this job." Then suddenly breaking out with a good-natured chuckle which cleared the air and made them like him: "I'm still hoping to celebrate my golden wedding in this house."

With that he left and joined his family at the (very expensive) inn, whither he had previously despatched them. There, sinking luxuriously into a deep chair before a cheerful fire, he lit a cigar, stroked his fond wife's hand and, sighing, said, "There's no place like home, let us be thankful for that!"

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VI

THE CARROLLS' HOUSE-WARMING

SCENES: Partly in the past, partly at "The Meadows" (proper name of a house called "The Carrolls'").

(SHOWING HOW A HOME FOUND ITSELF, AND SUGGESTING HOW THE CARROLLS FOUND THEMSELVES—AN ESTABLISHED UNIT IN A CONSERVATIVE CIRCLE OF THE NICEST PEOPLE.)

I

LIKE many another cherished project idealized in the planning and then worried over in the execution until it no longer seems a beautiful dream but a haunting nightmare, when at last the painters had exhausted their excuses for hanging on, and the shavings and sawdust were all swept up, and the architect actually gave the word to come—the Carrolls' house, when it was finished and had begun to find itself, turned out to be a great success after all.

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So, like that tenderest of emotions, a renewal of love (as when Fred and Molly had begun the interesting process of finding themselves), a brand-new joy was found in their brand-new house, the more appreciated because so utterly unexpected. They had abandoned all hope of its ever being charming or even a matter of interest: they thought it would remain only a matter of expense and regret, and now here it was, serenely what they had wanted all along!

The best things of life are apt to arrive by means of this three-cycle process: First, desire and dreams; then disillusionment and distress—sometimes despair; and then, at last, with patience and intelligent effort, a final adjustment to reality, with its humors, and its ironies, and its solid, secure satisfactions.

They had given up so many important ideals in the compromise with reality that they had quite forgotten that, as an actual, concrete realization, the plan and equipment of their home fitted their requirements like a glove, and satisfied their taste as no other

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house in the world could. In quarrelling with Wilson Peters about the carving on the mantel-pieces they had lost sight of the delightful fact that they would have plenty of open fires. In fretting about the handles of the water faucets they had failed to appreciate that, at any rate, they had plenty of bath-rooms and a down-stairs lavatory! Moreover, it was a well-constructed house, of good materials and careful workmanship. They experienced that other most pleasing glow that comes of trying on a well-ordered, well-fitting garment of the best materials, a satisfaction no ready-made one can ever give. The buttons didn't matter.

Exteriorly the house composed well, it fitted into the landscape well, looked as if it belonged there, had taken root there already and meant to stay.

To be sure, the place was as yet quite bare of grass, and the hedges were pathetically incipient, and the house itself cried aloud for vines. But in time all these things would be added unto it.

Of course, there was still a great deal to

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be done by way of transforming this new, raw building, with its lingering odor of paint, into a livable house with the atmosphere of home; this naked grading with its bleak and scraggly planting, into gardens, tennis courts, and a bit of "pure landscape." But they no longer took it hard or worried about it, because they were comfortable and on the spot and had something definite to work upon. With the sense of possession and the freedom from interference by others it was fun to work on their place—or play; the two things should be one and the same; they should be married, though often they are divorced—it was as much fun as it had been to plan the place itself before these two persons were married, and much more solid satisfaction.

Some of the doors had to be taken down and planed off at the top or the bottom and put up again. One of the chimneys didn't draw well, and they finally had to send for an expert from New York to diagnose the case, which was expensive, but effective. Despite their reiterated requests Wilson

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Peters had forgotten to put shelves in the bath-rooms. "I knew he would forget," said Molly; "he's a bachelor, and babies have never entered his existence. At least, not for a quarter of a century or so."

"But even a bachelor has to shave," said Fred, referring to his own bath-room. "He hasn't even left space at the top of the wainscot molding for a razor; he has taken pains to tack on one of his elaborately lathed bevels. See, even a tooth-brush slides off. But I suppose he thinks this is *pretty*."

"It would be cruel," said Molly, "not to let him 'express himself in his work.'"

However, Fred, being a mechanical genius, built the shelves himself. And though not very beautiful for a work of genius, especially as the artist's paint failed to match the other painter's color, the shelves were at any rate commodious enough to accommodate everything needed in a well-regulated family, from a medicine dropper to a large-sized spring-water bottle. So Molly could express herself in her work of modifying the milk for the little Carrolls.

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"It's a nuisance, this reputation for being a handy man about the place," Fred told Molly's callers. "Whenever the plumbing goes to smash—'Why call in a plumber? Fred, dear, just adores doing things!'" He had recently spent two hundred dollars worth of time on a two-dollar pipe, and was now on strike.

They said nothing about the shelves to Peters, but they did take pains to tell him that none of the windows stuck—not one! As there were ever so many windows in the house—the south façade being nearly all glass—this seemed a great achievement and cheered them on to the extra expense involved in weather-strips and storm-windows and such things, of which there seemed to be no end.

In the matter of the windows the Carrolls experienced another triumph. During the finishing of the house Molly one day discovered that in estimating these numerous extra expenses of turning a house into a home they had forgotten all about window shades. So they wrote down another two

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hundred dollars, fearing all the time that it would be double that, as it seemed a safe rule that everything was always double. But when the bill came in it was less than half of their estimate. Such things will happen sometimes, even in the worst regulated families.

This unprecedented experience encouraged them to invest in furniture and hangings, for the old curtains which Molly had hoped would do, did not fit, and the furniture (partly inherited from various members of two families and partly collected from various parts of two continents) which had crowded up their rooms uncomfortably in the old benighted days of renting now seemed so sparse as to be quite lonely in the many and larger rooms of their own wonderful home. They revelled in searching for the needed pieces. Furniture hunting had always been one of their vices, and now there was an added zest because they actually needed it, which justified their indulgence.

They had passed the stage of buying old

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things merely because they were old. What they selected now was useful and durable as well as interesting and of good lines. They made it a principle to have no chairs which were not comfortable chairs, except for a tall, stiff pair in the hall which no one by any chance ever sat in. The hall, of course, was treated formally, enough so as to serve as an intermediary between out-of-doors and the warmth and intimacy of the living room, but not enough so as to make the reception cold and pretentious. Cottages can have dignity if they do not try to look like something they are not. The prevailing note in the Carroll house was simplicity and comfort. "Livable and lovable," as Molly said—which seemed to be a good note for a home built to live in comfortably rather than to entertain in lavishly. For the Carrolls might have to live in it most of the summer and winter, whereas those they entertained in it would not be of a sort to worship or want lavishness. It took a good deal of time getting what they required in the way of furniture, and also a

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good deal of money, but they were used to spending money by this time. It is easy to acquire the habit. Besides, as Fred gravely pointed out to Molly, it never paid to buy cheap furniture.

They also had a good deal of satisfaction in "laying out the home grounds." On that same economical principle (which the Carrolls practised so conscientiously) of its "paying in the long run" to get the best, they had accepted the services of a landscape architect as soon as the outside of the house was finished and the hauling was over with. For would it not be cheaper in the long run, they asked themselves, to begin aright rather than tear everything up after it was well started wrong? Assuredly. Practical foresight.

At the outset they achieved a triumph over Wilson Peters; in this way: it may be remembered that the cardinal principle of their dream house, the one thing above all others which they declined to surrender, was the long, low, near-to-the-sod effect. It seemed very important to them that their

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house should be only a step or two above the ground. But Peters, as if to spite his clients, jacked the house up, so to speak, in the final plan, without consulting them.

Molly sighed, but Fred smiled knowingly. "Wait and see," he said. When it came time for the grading he quietly instructed the landscape architect to grade all the way up to the weather-board; thus not only was the ugly rough foundation stone completely hidden, but the low effect was greatly enhanced and there was only one step up into the house instead of two or three, as called for by the architect's plans.

By the time Peters made another visit to see how the Carroll job was coming on—his visits were not frequent at this period—the grading was finished, and it was too late to change. Naturally he was furious. "Don't you know a grade line when you see it on a blue print?" he demanded.

"Mr. Carroll's orders," was the reply.

"Oh, all right! If Mr. Carroll wants a damp cellar, that's his own affair."

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But the cellar remained dusty. Ordinarily Peters' surmise would have been correct, and no doubt it was quite unprofessional in the Carrolls to take this liberty, but Fred had luck and science with him, as it happened. For, during the process of excavation, he had observed that the cleavage ran down toward the north, while the surface of the soil sloped to the south. Natural drainage kept the cellar dry. It was after this that Fred, who had merely felt pretty sure of it before, became convinced that he might have made a great architect.

II

Well, when at last they had discovered most of the secrets of a reticent furnace, and had learned by experience, bitter and cold, to swathe in mineral wool certain aloof water pipes which "that man Peters" had placed unprotected within one of the coldest outside walls of the house—as a souvenir, they supposed, of his architectural sense of humor; when the pictures and imported junk were all hung—or as many

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and as much as they meant to hang at one time, for "we hate crowded walls," they said; when the mellow, well-worn rugs were all down and the curtains, new, but unobtrusively so, were all up; when the telephone was put in and the smell of paint was put out, when the postman and the butcher's boy had learned to call as regularly and nonchalantly at the Carroll house as if it had been there always, Fred and Molly put their heads together one early spring day and decided that, since they had spent about double the amount which they had solemnly agreed a year or two previously to invest in a home, they would now have a grand house-warming.

For it would be a useless extravagance to build such a nice house if they couldn't do nice things for people with it. They both disapproved of extravagance. So they engaged a caterer and musicians from town and issued invitations, not only to the whole colony, but to all the friends they had in other parts of the world. Since the Carrolls had joined the colony every one had been

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most kind to them, and this would be a nice way "to show them our appreciation," said Fred.

"And also," added Molly, "to show them our house."

It proved to be a great success. Only, the guests at first failed to realize what was expected of them. Instead of stopping abruptly at the charming entrance to gaze entranced at the unfolding vista of softly toned rooms, they scurried through to take off their wraps in that self-centered and rather solemn manner so many people adopt upon arriving at an "at-home," as if it were a funeral rather than a festivity. And upon saluting their hostess, who looked quite as charming, but not half so excited as she really was, instead of telling her how much they admired her beautiful home, they chose to tell her about the weather. In fact, they acted very much as though it were an ordinary party at an ordinary house! They obliviously turned their backs to, or even leaned against, architectural details which had cost nights of careful study, days of

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nervous wrangling, merely to ask one another if they were going to the dance at the riding club next Friday, or how late they expected to remain in the country this year.

It seems unaccountable that they did not all talk about the house at once, but the Carrolls graciously overlooked the omission, being quite busy, Molly telling those who came how good it was of them to do so, and Fred conscientiously breaking up congenial tête-à-têtes just as they were becoming interesting in order to present men to lonely women.

Later in the evening, however, after the guests had had something to eat and drink and had stopped thinking about themselves or their clothes, they manifested a marked improvement. Many of them told Molly that she was "to be congratulated upon having such a pretty house." Others remarked that it was "so much larger than it looked from the outside." Still others pronounced it cosey, quite original, or so artistic.

In fact, nearly every one who liked it finally said so, and as none of those who

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disliked it said anything about that to Molly, she decided that they all liked it, and therefore she liked them and beamed and was as much pleased as though her children or even her husband were being praised—though, to be sure, they could not fully appreciate the house (any more than they could Fred or the children), or else they would not call it "cosey," a word she hated, or "artistic," which Fred hated even more.

Fred in the meanwhile was not faring quite so well. He was quite willing to tell all about it, but they wouldn't give him a chance. There was a certain girl there with a twinkle in her rather unusual eyes who admired Fred's work. She told him that his house "was just the kind one would expect an artist to build." That was all right so far. But, unfortunately, she asked him, "What style is it?" and this brought on a whole avalanche of authoritative explanation—that it was no style at all, that most people seem to think a house must be an academic, unimaginative copy of some-

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thing that has gone before. True, you must know what has gone before, but, etc. She wasn't in the least interested. She wanted to flirt with him. He didn't discover it until after she left with another man who would. . . . Fred was becoming so old and out of practice that he didn't always recognize the signals when he saw them. A sad state for the father of a growing family.

Then there was also a nice, well-meaning old gentleman who innocently asked Fred about the coloring of the wall, not that he cared a hang, but because he didn't know what else to say, artists and such being rather perplexing freaks to him. But Fred warmed to him at once and was off like a colt at the barrier: The permanent treatment of walls could not be determined in advance; professional decorators say so, but they are all liars; the light is never quite as you expect it to be, or the furniture modifies the effect subtly but tremendously. Therefore, it is necessary to get acquainted with a room first, just as you must get ac-

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quainted with people before you can do their portraits. Problem: what to do in the meanwhile. White is sepulchral; tint will chip off. In this case the coloring had been mixed with the rough plaster—mixed before putting on, you understand. A great risk, he admitted, a pure gamble, but in these rooms luck had been with him; they were quite successful. Upstairs, however, he had missed it badly, etc., etc., until Fred saw the unlistening eyes following a tray of punch glasses out of the room; then he stopped and said, "Oh, won't you have some supper? Do have some supper. You *must!*"

Even Wilson Peters declined to warm to the subject, and as he was the architect of the house, it seemed about as base as a father's refusing to acknowledge his own child. Fred, with a view to healing the breach between them, had made a special point of inviting Wilson and had lionized him all evening whenever any one asked, "Who was your architect?" Fred thought it rather generous to give Peters so much

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honor, when, as could easily be proved, "the whole charm of the house was in spite of, not because of, Wilson Peters." It could be proved by Molly. But Peters, if the truth must be told, did not care to be lionized over building a simple little house in the country. For wasn't he engaged upon the plans for an insane asylum which was to cost half a million and would have appropriate ornamentation all over it?

Alas! the breach has never been completely healed. Each tries to make the other think he likes him as in the old days, but neither deceives the other. Each laughs with unnecessary loudness at the other's jokes, but both are palpably nervous at the approach of the awful pauses which come more and more frequently in their chance meetings, which are becoming less and less numerous. Instead of calling him "Pete," Fred now addresses his former friend and architect as "Wilson," after the manner of the latter's mother, which gives the architect a mingled sense of incongruity and perplexity—for what's he to call Fred Carroll,

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who has no other name? He might try "Frederic."

During the entire evening, otherwise delightful, Fred found only one man who showed a sincere yearning to talk about the house, and he was a guest whose name Fred did not know. He had arrived late and seemed to prefer to remain upstairs in the "gentlemen's dressing-room" (otherwise the children's day-nursery). By way of picking up an acquaintance, he said to Fred, "What a hell of a house!"

This sounded sincere enough, but hardly explicit. Fred led him on to elucidate.

"Why, the front door's in the back! Never saw such a house."

"That's so," Fred assented, "the chief entrances, the staircases, the kitchen wing, the pantries, the studio—all the works of the house—seem to be on the cold north side, facing the road." But he could not resist adding, "I suppose the idea was to throw all the living rooms together in one sweep on the south side, where they would have the view and the terrace and the sun-

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shine, and yet be secluded." Fred started to leave.

"Secluded?" sneered the other. "I should think so! I waded through the mud up to my ankles clear around to the south side—and then couldn't get in! Had to plough my way back again."

Fred abruptly turned back. "Did you step on that freshly seeded ground!" he demanded.

The man looked up with sudden interest and held out his hand. "Shake!" he said humorously. "So you made the same mistake?"

"No, oh no," said Fred in a changed tone, "but—I was thinking it must have been bad for your pumps."

"Look!" The stranger displayed them dramatically. "That's why I can't go down-stairs. And I ordered my carriage not to come till late. Oh, Lord!"

"Have a cigar," said his host, sitting down. This was worth while, even though Molly might need him below.

"I don't want to go down, anyway," the

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man went on, biting the cigar viciously, though really quite happy at last to have some one so sympathetic to talk to; none of the others had waited to listen. "The ceilings are so low that it must be stifling down there."

"Yes, it's fierce," said Fred. "The only way you can get any air is by going out on the terrace. They've partly enclosed it with cheap brown khaki with crimson designs painted on it, and just a few pyramidal shrubs in green tubs at formal intervals. That's why you couldn't break in by way of the south front. You ought to see those designs—home-made affairs; anybody can tell that. They might just as well have let the florists fix up something tasty or even classy for them. But the music's out there, and a lot of flirtation around a punch-bowl big enough to swim in! Too bad you didn't wade all the way round."

At this the stranger looked so disappointed that Fred felt quite inhospitable.

"All the same," returned the disgruntled guest, "it's absurd to have such low ceilings. Look at them."

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Fred looked at them. "They *are* pretty low," he admitted, recalling how he had fought with Peters to keep them low. "I suppose they expect to import their fresh air from out-of-doors. Foolish idea."

"But what can you expect of a crazy artist!" remarked the other with an indulgent smile. "The whole house is in keeping."

"So it is," answered Fred—"so it is. The whole house is in keeping. But then these crazy artists will do anything to be original."

"And to think of some of the houses right here in this colony he might easily have copied, and it wouldn't have cost him a cent more nor half the trouble!"

"Yes, think of some of them!" Fred agreed fervently. They were both enjoying themselves and forgetting their cares, which is the object of social intercourse.

"Turning the plainest side of the house, what little you can see of it, toward the street!" the interesting guest went on, warming to his congenial acquaintance. "The terraces, the porches, the flower gardens—practically everything nice about the place—are hidden. Bah!"

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"Bah!" agreed Fred.

"Now, if *I* were building on this site," said the other—"want to know what I'd do?"

Fred wanted to know very much.

"Well, in the first place, I'd have my entrance gate down at the far corner, with a circular drive leading up to my front door, which would be a *real* front door, in the *real* front of my house."

"With a circular pile of rocks in the middle of the circle?" asked Fred enthusiastically.

"Exactly."

"And a crescent-shaped geranium-bed on each side?"

"Why, yes!"

"Yes," said Fred, arising to go, but wishing he could stay, "I'm sure you would."

The guest proceeded, "And as for the house—" But his young friend had gone. However, a servant came a few minutes later bearing Scotch and carbonic and a lot of hot supper, which he found even more congenial.

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III

Toward the end of the evening, when nearly every one was having a good time, with tongues free, eyes bright, laughter real, just as the first symptoms were felt of the breaking up, old Colonel Davidge arose, and, tapping on the table for silence, lifted his glass and proposed a toast, with the grace of an old-fashioned Southerner of the expansive school, and with the authority of a veteran who had served brilliantly through two wars and a long diplomatic career—a toast, with many interesting and ornate phrases, to the two charming and talented additions to the colony and to the new and beautiful home which graced the landscape.

Fred had his smiling doubts about some of his guests being quite so intimately acquainted with his works of genius as the dear old colonel intimated, but Molly did not share these doubts, and, at any rate, both of them felt very proud and happy —too proud, as Fred said, shaking his head when they called upon him to respond,

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to spoil such a beautiful climax with an anticlimax, too happy to make the rest of them unhappy, and especially to make a puffed-up hostess ashamed of her husband. As the host concluded, he spied, upon the landing of the stairs, the lonely guest—mouth and eyes wide open.

However, the house was now "warmed." But homes do not find themselves by housewarmings, any more than Mr. Kipling's ship found itself by the ceremony of launching. Ships find themselves by sailing voyages, and homes by being inhabited for years, until they fit like an old shoe and become a part of the owner's life like a memory of childhood.

Mr. and Mrs. Frederic Carroll were at tea on the terrace. The children were at play in the sand-pile, their legs as brown as the sand. Guests were expected later for dinner. Sparrows were twittering in the low eaves. "Do you remember," said Molly, surveying with purring complacency the cool velvet lawn, the well-trimmed hedge, the

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vines clambering bravely up the low walls of the house—"I wonder if you remember what a dreadful time we had building this house?"

Fred nodded and smiled absently, absorbed now in other plans, throwing out work like a well-geared threshing machine. "Took it too seriously," he said. "We always take things we care about too seriously—and things we don't care about not seriously enough."

"Well, I'm glad we did," said Molly contentedly; "that's one reason why we love it so."

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VII

THE FAMILY PARTY

SCENES: The same set and properties as in the last, but with an entirely different background. Victorian atmosphere. Any American household of "culture and refinement" would do as well.

(OTHER MEMBERS OF ONE OF OUR BEST FAMILIES APPEAR, EXPLAINING (BY THEIR SILENCE) MUCH THAT HAS GONE BEFORE. SUDDENLY A FAMILY SKELETON IS DISCLOSED, THE CLAN SPIRIT IS AROUSED, AND THE HOUSE OF CARROLL NOW SEEMS SOUND AND SECURE.)

THE distinguished Carroll family's cherished custom of foregathering once a year about an unnecessarily long dinner and pretending to enjoy being together had usually been observed on Thanksgiving Day, with the venerable head of the house beaming upon all alike—including the uneasy "in-laws"—and reminding them every now and then how good and pleasant it was for brethren to dwell together in unity.

When this annual comedy, appropriately produced with a setting of mid-Victorian

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furniture and formality in a gloomy old house up the Hudson, was at last brought to a climax of kisses and genuinely happy good-bys, and all the very different couples had fled away to the centres of their distinct universes, they always vowed, as they dosed their offspring for indigestion, that they would never go through the ordeal again.

But, of course, the next year found them there once more, each doing his best to look delighted. None of them knew just why it was kept up. They thought it was only to gratify their beloved father, to whom family parties had become the chief of his few remaining joys. But there was also another impulse, less conscious, more potent—the clan instinct.

I

There came an epoch-making year in the history of the ancient Carroll family. The old home nucleus was abroad—and expected to *remain* abroad until late in December! "It grieves us," wrote Aunt

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Bella from Italy, "to think of foregoing the usual happy time together." So for once the dark-blue shades remained drawn upon the tall, narrow windows of the many stuffy rooms of the sombre old house all through Thanksgiving Day, and for once sincere thanks ascended from the various parts of our country inhabited by Carrolls. But the rejoicing was short-lived.

Just when the rest of the brethren were sinking luxuriously into that serenity which follows escape from an anticipated ordeal, two inconsiderate young members of the family, known as "the Freds," without a word of warning, invited the whole tribe to their small but charming country place, recently finished with great rejoicing and expense, in order to celebrate Christmas, the opening of the "our new house," and the safe return of father and Aunt Bella, who were due to land beamingly in America on the twentieth.

Now, to be sure, the Fred Carrolls enjoyed giving family parties no more than the rest of the middle generation enjoyed

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attending them. But Fred thought that the others would like to come, and the others thought that feelings would be hurt if they declined. So when Fred's wife wrote characteristically gracious notes to all the other wives, telling them what a joy it would be and how she was looking forward to it, the other wives straightway accepted, telling her what a dear she was, and how *they* were looking forward to it. . . . Just when Archie, the eldest and wealthiest, had planned to start South; and Roger, the professor and the poorest, had counted upon attending the annual meeting of the American Economic Association!

Fred, though given to doing unaccountable things, was the last they would have suspected of this, with the possible exception of Molly, his wife, for early in life he had departed more widely than any of them from the traditions of the family. And as for Fred's wife, she, to be sure, had never enjoyed the benefit of such traditions at all, being "from" the Pacific coast, and of Southern extraction at that! So,

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although Aunt Bella, in the kindness of her heart, was wont to remark, for Molly's encouragement, "But we never think of you, my dear, as a Californian," it was as obviously recognized, as it was politely ignored, that this past of hers—for which they would never dream of holding her responsible; she was so young at the time—this mere accident of birth, for that, they admitted, was all it amounted to, had, nevertheless held Fred's wife in an environment (during the "formative period") just a little too remote to be reached and redeemed by even such potent cultural influences as the Boston Carrolls. But Aunt Bella still hoped and prayed, with a faith that might have moved Plymouth Rock to San Francisco Bay—had the good lady been willing—that all things would work together for good to them that love God.

The family's chief claim to distinction in previous generations had been in the pursuit of piety and scholarship—with just enough "drifting into money-making," as their unworldly but not unhumorous father

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called it, or else into advantageous matrimony, to make their lives comfortable as well as useful. But Fred had become a painter! So, while not a Philistine, like all those who made money, he was necessarily considered a Bohemian, like all artists, which perhaps was even worse. Therefore he felt himself more out of the family picture and less understood than any of the brethren—each of whom, it may be added, cherished a similar illusion about himself.

Perhaps it was that the Bohemian wanted to get back into the family picture. Until recent years he had led a nomadic existence in various parts of the world; perhaps he was hearkening, unconsciously, to the call of the clan. Having a young family of his own now, perhaps he thought a family party would do them good, and at the same time might serve to rid the house of the lingering taint of newness and help to establish the atmosphere of home.

But that was not what made Molly take

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to the project. She saw a chance she had wanted ever since she had married into the Carroll family.

"I'll agree to have them here upon one condition," she said, her eyes twinkling, "and that is that you will join me in a scheme to reform your family! With a merry, old-fashioned Christmas party, such as we used to have in *our* family—with a tree and a yule-log and eggnog——"

"Look out, Molly! Aunt Bella." Their generous old aunt devoted much time and money to the cause of the W. C. T. U., having at her command considerable of each, thanks to that Carroll ancestor who had devoted his time and money to the manufacture of Medford rum.

"Oh, that's so." Molly stopped a moment. "Very well, we'll omit the eggnog. But, at any rate, they will be far removed from that dreadful old house with its atmosphere of artificiality. That has been the chief trouble heretofore. No one can be spontaneous there. The ghastly color scheme always gets on *your* nerves; and

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the horrible memories of our engagement days always get on mine. I don't believe any of us 'in-laws' can ever enter that gloomy place without snapping back into the old defiant attitude of the days when Aunt Bella tried to poison the minds of the family against each of us in turn. But this fresh, new house of ours, bright and innocent and full of charm, hasn't any atmosphere or memories at all! It will be like getting them on neutral ground. Don't you see, dear?"

"Well," said Fred, with a reflective smile, "it will be interesting in any case to see how they take it."

So these two set about to reform the Carroll family—a rather ambitious attempt on their part, but they were still young. They decked out their unsuspecting house with holly, put wreaths in all the many windows, hung mistletoe in the arches and placed a Christmas-tree in the studio, which had a ceiling high enough for a tall one. They soon became absorbed in their plans, and Fred drew caricatures of various mem-

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bers of the family for dinner-cards, while Molly wrote appropriate verses.

"Nothing like a few jokes," said Fred, "to strike the note and start them going. I have seen that worked to good effect in other families—when I was a bachelor."

They had a very pleasant anticipatory picture—all the little nephews and nieces in white piqué against the dark woodwork of the hall, the glow of the yule-log shining on their red sashes, merry laughter, wassail, good cheer. Even Fred became quite enthusiastic. Perhaps Molly hadn't so much imagination, but she did more of the work, and that increased her enthusiasm.

So when at last the great day arrived they really believed they could make it go—if, that is, Molly could only remember to avoid references to Unitarianism, vegetarianism, and second marriages. For her father-in-law was a famous Unitarian (see records of the Andover Controversy), Aunt Bella was a conscientious vegetarian, and Archie had married a worldly widow, much to the chagrin of the family, who did not

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approve of second marriages. As a memorandum, Molly took the initials of these taboos and repeated them frequently upon her fingers, "U.V.M.—U.V.M." Then feeling secure on these points she became ambitious and made Fred rehearse her upon all the minor forbidden topics, though, since it was a large family and Molly had but ten fingers, the chances were against her. Nevertheless, hope rose high in the new Carroll house. Fred and Molly were not unconscious of being considered good hosts.

But they had reckoned without their guests. The family did not know it was to be reformed. Nor did it want to be reformed. The Family never does—no more than any of our other well-meaning, unimaginative institutions. Why not leave good enough alone? Whatever was is right, and ever more shall be.

II

Around a charming old mahogany dinner-table (extended to its full length for the first time since the hostess had in-

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herited it from her grandmother) festively decorated in green and red by one of America's most promising young landscape painters, with humorous dinner-cards, especially designed for each place by the same talented hand, enlivened by jocular verses from the pen of his clever wife, were seated two very good-looking generations of the distinguished Carroll family, politely waiting for the end of the Christmas party.

Except for the change of scene (and cuisine), the comedy was proceeding quite as usual, and each pretty wreath in the windows seemed a mocking "O" from the mouth of a comic mask. For, you see, the *dramatis personæ* were the same, and they had all learned their parts too well upon the old stage to forget them on the new. In short, the Carrolls were not accustomed to having a good time together, and it seems they did not intend to on this occasion. They had come expecting to be bored, and so they had proceeded to be bored at once. They had hardly taken off their wraps before Fred and Molly felt the familiar symp-

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toms of the annual slump which always succeeded the first gently animated expressions of interest in one another's health and children. "I hope you are well." "Yes, thank you; are you well?" "Quite well, thank you—and how's the baby?"

That was not the way the hosts had intended to start off at all! They wondered what was the matter, as they began showing the guests about the new house—the first of the "things to do," by which they hoped to keep the family enlivened. Perhaps the unexpected current in the atmosphere was due to Fred's lack of fraternal spirit in securing the services of his friend Wilson Peters instead of the architect who had married into the family and was now in the family party viewing his rival's work in polite silence, while sneering inwardly at the surbases.

But that was not the trouble. It was simply that the unbidden guest had also arrived—the Family Attitude. It hypnotized them. Molly lost all her sparkle; became quiet, formal, constrained. As for

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Fred, he did not arise to the occasion at all; he slipped down into the accustomed niche assigned him of yore by the family, and was now merely one of the younger brothers of the wonderful Archie. He seemed to be trying to efface himself against the woodwork. Molly threw him an imploring glance. He avoided her eyes. This man before her was no longer "Frederic Carroll, the well-known landscape painter," who should have been proud of making a greater mark in the world than any of them—without family influence, despite family opposition. This was merely a shy, self-conscious boy, blowing his nose unnecessarily, ashamed of himself, of his house, of his wife. Molly drew near and pinched him. He glared at her indignantly. They hated each other.

The tree in the studio had pleased the children, though it did seem to Aunt Bella like a flaunting of Molly's sensuous Episcopalianism in the very faces of the Carrolls. But when Fred, to the tune of sleigh-bells, entered, made up like Santa Claus—and

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feeling like the devil—one of Archie's nervous children, brought up "without superstitions," was nearly frightened into hysterics by the apoplectic-hued false-face, and Archie cried, "For Heaven's sake, Fred, take it off!" Never would Fred and Molly forget the terrible look of sophistication which crept over the trusting faces of their own little dears, who had been brought up with superstitions, when there was destroyed in one stroke of the hand their illusion of Santa Claus and their belief in their father. . . .

But they had counted upon dinner to redeem the cause. Molly prided herself upon her dinners, and this was undoubtedly a good one. They all politely told her so, just as Aunt Bella informed Fred, examining her dinner-card with thoughtful interest through her lorgnette, that his caricatures were "capital" and Molly's lines "very clever indeed." Then they began to eat, for that, to be sure, is the object of dinners. Fred, feeling inexpressible sensations, turned and asked Archie's wife for

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the third time in three hours whether the new governess was proving a success.

"Twenty-four hours more of this!" thought Molly at her end of the table. For Christmas came on Saturday, and they had invited the family for the week-end, so that they "all could become well acquainted for once." On her right sat her father-in-law, of whom she was sincerely fond, beaming as usual like a patriarch. He patted her hand and whispered, "It was thoughtful of you, my dear, to prepare this surprise for us while we were on the ocean. Nothing could have gratified us more than to be in your delightful home and to see all the family so happy together." Then he turned to beam upon the timid creature upon the other side, Herbert's fiancée, who was still in the state of abject terror she tried to conceal ever since her arrival.

On Molly's other hand was Archie, Fred's eldest brother, the family oracle. He had been told by his aunt and sisters that he was wonderful so often that he had begun to think there must be something in

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it. Molly, saying to herself, "This is the man who used to make me cry," was now trying her best to make him talk. Archie did not even try. To him she was only his impractical brother's improvident wife. If she had been anybody else's wife he would have found her interesting. But they were kept apart by the very thing that had brought them together—their relationship. They knew too much about each other, and cared too little. He knew how hard up the artist branch of the family often was, and she knew that the widow had brought Archie a substantial income of her own, with which he now did good to the poor.

Archie did not seem to care for Molly's views on Pragmatism, so she glanced down the table to see how the others were getting on. At this dinner it was easier to pick out the couples who were talking than those who were not.

Uncle Thomas was having a very good time talking to Sophia, who sat on the other side of Archie. She was a German, whom brother Roger had married while

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taking his degree at Leipzig, and though the family had finally forgiven Roger for this, they had never quite forgiven Sophia. But they tried to show her that they were treating her just as kindly as if she were forgivable and that it took a Carroll to rise to such heights. Roger and Sophia lived upon an assistant professor's salary, with more children than they had any business having. Incidentally they were about the happiest of the lot. Archie, who had been tossing her a few fraternal inquiries, thought he was indulgently kind to her, while she felt herself—and especially her brilliant husband—to be serenely superior to all that Archie considered success.

Uncle Thomas was an old bachelor, and boasted of never having missed but one funeral in the entire connection, and that happened when he was travelling. That, it was said, was why he had never travelled since. The family was large and somebody might take an unfair advantage of him. Uncle Thomas was quite wealthy, and Sophia was listening with rapt atten-

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tion to the history of the Carroll family during the American Revolution. She and Roger had named their second boy Thomas.

Aunt Bella was also enjoying herself, because she was giving the architect the benefit of her views on architecture. He was buoyed up by the prospect of one of Fred's good cigars when at last the meal would be over. It seemed to him a crime to spoil such a good dinner with nothing but water, and he glanced across the table at his wife, who winked at him. She was named after Aunt Bella, but was a very different Bella. For since her marriage she had become one of the most emancipated of the lot, had acquired the modern boldness in ideas and the expression thereof, and prattled constantly about her sense of humor, thus proving how much she had. Her pose did not go very well with her face. The younger Bella was tenderly beautiful. Her brother Fred, the painter, gazed at her idolatrously, as he always did. Though he despised her—as only a brother can despise a sister whose poses are as familiar as her

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garments—yet with her adorable profile she was helping him wonderfully through his jolly family reunion.

Aunt Bella had no husband to contribute to the solemnity of the occasion, but she was the chief conservator of the Carroll traditions, including the immemorial one they were now ably illustrating, of being bored to death whenever they foregathered. She would not allow gossip, and made general talk impossible, because unless you believed as she believed you were made to feel—not only by her but by those who were afraid of her—like an alien and a renegade. As they were sure to run against one of these hidden snags if they let go and drifted down the current of conversation, they had all learned by experience never to let go. When it becomes necessary to stop and think before saying anything most of the time is spent in thinking and stopping. Consequently the Carrolls never talked. They only conversed.

That was what most of them were trying their best to do at the present moment, all

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down that side of the table and up the other, past the silent engaged couple, to old Dr. Carroll, who was saying, "If only Sarah could be here to enjoy this with us." Sarah was the daughter who had been married about a year before.

Now it so happened that this sigh was heard by Harry, the youngest, who sat near by. He was rather a naughty boy, still in college, who considered family parties the limit, and looked with indulgent contempt upon all his things-in-law, especially the sad bird who wore detachable cuffs. But neither being married, engaged, nor guarded in his utterances, he said, "Well, why *isn't* Sarah here?" for he had been considered too young to be informed.

The old gentleman was deaf. His youngest repeated the question in a loud tone.

Every one was aroused. Aunt Bella and two of the other ladies answered in concert, "Sarah is ill."

"What's the matter with her?" he blurted out.

For a moment silence reverberated about

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the table. Then Aunt Bella threw herself into the breach. "Fred, is that a copy of the Peale portrait of the 'Signer?' "

Noble Aunt Bella!

This episode scared them into a confused animation for a few moments, all trying to give the illusion of not having heard what each was still thinking about. But, of course, it did not last very long, and all were relieved by the interruption of the telephone bell in the hall. Fred was summoned. They heard him calling, "Yes, this is Mr. Carroll." And now might have been observed another familiar family phenomenon: They were all trying to talk to show that they were not listening, while at the same time they were endeavoring to hear what Fred said with a view to guessing what was being said to him. Naturally, their responses to one another were somewhat vague.

They all knew what it was before Fred returned to the room, and each knew that all the rest knew, but every one pretended otherwise while Fred proceeded to make

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his announcement with becoming Carroll reserve. "What do you think has happened?"

There was no answer.

"Guess!"

No one could guess. They turned politely expectant faces toward him.

It was too much for Molly. "Oh, quick! Is it a girl or a boy?"

"It's a little girl," said Fred, adding, as he dropped his eyes, "Sarah is doing splendidly."

Now that it was officially known, the glad news was immediately repeated to the happy grandfather in loud tones by several voices at once—including Aunt Bella's. The new member of the Carroll family and her mother were now perfectly proper topics of conversation. Two minutes before they had been improper.

But even a new Carroll, without any conscious Carroll traditions, could not redeem a Carroll dinner. The talk soon died down again, though the grandfather continued to glow with quiet satisfaction,

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apparently quite as happy as though it were the first time, occasionally asking questions—sometimes rather embarrassing ones, which kept Aunt Bella on the jump. For in mellow old age, when death is near and all life seems sweet and worthy, it is difficult always to remember just what used to be considered "genteel" and what "ungenteel."

Aunt Bella, however, gave a worthy exhibition of the well-known Carroll tact.

Now, if Molly had not been fatigued by her futile efforts to make the party a success she might have been able to perform the mental jump to the outside of the family circle, and thus enjoy the spectacle from the objective point of view; but she was not accustomed to seeing people bored at her table, and she resented their establishing this atmosphere of artificiality in her house. Perhaps she dreaded its becoming the permanent atmosphere of the new house —which the family called "Fred's house" quite as consistently as her people called it "Molly's house."

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It was the incident of the game course which brought about a climax. The quail which now came on had been shot by Fred himself the month before, and they had been hanging for this famous occasion not wisely but too long. They had been beautifully cooked, after a manner well known in Molly's family, enclosed in an envelope of oiled paper to retain the flavor and juices.

So it was not discovered that the birds had been kept too long until the family, with polite expressions of interest (to show they were not jealous of Molly's originality), opened the dainty envelopes, then each member of the family in turn seemed to find it necessary to lean far back in his chair, operating knives and forks at arm's-length. Molly burst out laughing and ordered the offending little birds removed from the room.

"Not at all," said Aunt Bella; "they are very nice, I'm sure. Connoisseurs prefer them this way." But she was pretending to blow her nose.

Molly laughed again—this time almost pleading with them to laugh with her. She

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laughed alone. Even young Harry, the naughty boy, was displaying his good manners. "Oh, Aunt Bella," she cried, still trying to relieve the tension; "you're a vegetarian, you can get out of it, but spare the others!" and she signalled the servants to hurry.

"Such was not my intention," said Aunt Bella in the manner of the unappreciated.

Again Molly began to laugh and again alone. She stopped abruptly. It was the last straw. She ceased to struggle. It was no use. The party was a failure. If they preferred to do it this way, let them do it. She washed her hands of them. Once more she looked down the double row of polite masks. "And this," she said to herself, "is what I am expected to endure for the rest of my life!" She gazed at her husband with dull, uninterested eyes. He seemed to be as bad as any of them. He was a Carroll. She was an outsider. It was one of those moments when she wondered how she had ever married him.

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She turned and scrutinized his brother Archie beside her. He wore the characteristic Carroll look of expressionless reserve, his lack-lustre gaze upon the table-cloth at an angle of forty-five degrees. He had said nothing for ten minutes. Apparently he saw nothing, thought nothing, expected nothing.

She could not very well stick a pin into him, but as it happened she startled him almost as much. Yielding to a sudden impulse she leaned close to his mask and said, "Booh!"

Archie jumped as though an electric current had passed through him and ejaculated involuntarily, "Why booh?" Then hearing his own words and realizing their utter absurdity, he blushed and blinked at her helplessly.

"Well, not necessarily 'booh,'" Molly replied with whimsical gravity, apparently not in the least confused. "I was merely wondering if you were as bored as you look. But it's really of no consequence." Then with a conventional smile she relaxed into

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her chair again, as though quite willing to drop the situation she had created.

But this was not to be. There was a spark of life in that childish "booh" of hers, the first vital utterance these two had ever produced. It was not to die at birth; it was to mature and bear fruit.

III

She had surprised him, but now he stopped blinking and surprised her.

"On the contrary," he replied, perfectly cool, "I couldn't possibly look as bored as I am."

"Dear me!" she returned glancing at him with real interest and a little more respect, "it's even worse than I feared!"

"But it's not your fault," he remarked pleasantly. "We always *are* bored, you know, when we get together."

"I did not dream of its being my fault," she said. "It's one of the Carroll customs. Even those who are only Carrolls by marriage soon acquire it!"

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It was rather neat.

"You mean that you are just as bored as I am?"

"More so, if possible."

They looked at each other and laughed —the first real laugh they had ever had together. They enjoyed it.

"Well, there's nothing like family unity," said Archie. "We aren't the only victims. Look at the rest of them!"

But even while these two impious ones were exchanging their blasphemies, speaking in low tones with heads close together to avoid being overheard, a subtle change in the atmosphere of the table had begun. Aunt Bella, ever on the alert, ever determined to know everything that was being said and thought, wondered what these two were discussing with such unwonted animation, such close intimacy!

"It's a rather amusing sight," Archie was saying in a low tone.

"Sometimes," smiled Molly.

"Always," corrected Archie.

"Not when you're the hostess." She

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was still smiling, carelessly, but Archie was quick and felt a sudden appreciation of her situation.

But he was not the kind who knows how to express sympathy, so he only smiled—he had his father's smile—and said, "Well, what did you expect? You've been one of us now long enough to know better."

Molly really liked this more than if he had become serious. "Oh, yes," she said, "Fred and I deserve it, I suppose, for daring to plot against the sacred custom. We'll never try it again."

"So that was it!" Archie exclaimed. "I had been wondering how to account for your inviting us. Of course, I knew it wasn't because you wanted us."

"Not in the least. Why should we want you?"

"Quite so. No more than we wanted to come."

"Why *did* you come, by the way?"

"Probably for the same reason, though you didn't realize it, that you invited us—an instinct deeper than our conscious de-

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sires, more potent than our personal preferences."

A bit didactic, perhaps, but interesting all the same to Molly. Clearly, he too, had looked this matter in the face. Now they were both looking it in the face together. Therefore they were no longer bored, and this shows that boredom can commit suicide with the God-given gift of speech.

The little leaven of life in Molly's "booh!" was spreading. Others besides Aunt Bella were now feeling the sudden flare of animation at one corner of the table. It was not a customary sight this, two members of the family enjoying each other's society for several consecutive minutes. It made the observers rather nervous. They had a firm conviction that it would soon die a natural death—if not a violent one—by being dashed to pieces against one of the family taboos. But meanwhile, just to show that they were not noticing this unprecedented thing or feeling the slightest apprehension, they all proceeded to give an illusion of conversation. Aunt Bella asked the

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architect if he did not greatly admire Ruskin's "Stones of Venice." What the architect wanted to reply shall not be recorded in the annals of such a refined family. So he lied and said, "Oh, tremendously," and swallowed another glass of water.

"I mean," Archie was now saying to Molly, "that whether we like it or not, we are bound together by ties of mutual interest, communal feeling. We are all in the family and we can't get out. Now you may hate me——"

"But, somehow, I don't," interrupted Molly, looking at him critically. "At least, not so much now that I've made you talk."

"Well, then—I may hate you," Archie went on imperturbably; "but your children and my children have some of the same blood in their veins. It's hard luck, but they can't help it. You can divorce Fred, but you can't divorce your children. You and I are bound together irrevocably."

Molly looked at him a moment. "Dear me!" she said; "what a prospect! Once a

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year, as long as we live, you and I must meet and bore each other."

"It's pretty bad," said Archie. "There's only one thing worse, and that would be not to do it at all. Little-minded people who want to destroy the family, simply because it is imperfect like the church, or marriage itself, or any of our institutions, usually haven't wisdom or imagination enough to consider the alternative. What is the use of knocking down even bad things unless you can stick better things up?"

"But why have so many 'things'?" Molly inquired. "It's all habit."

"Habit founded upon human cravings—cravings which can't be suppressed."

"I believe I could suppress my human craving for family parties," said Molly. She said it in the quiet way she did her joking, as though not much impressed by the joke.

Archie burst into a laugh. He was getting an occasional inkling of what Fred saw in this girl. The others heard the laugh and wondered. They all knew Archie's real

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laugh from his assumed merriment. This was his real laugh.

"But then you would probably get ostracized from the family, and that would hardly pay. It's easier to come and get bored."

"But why be bored? Why can't we have a merry, congenial time together like other families?"

"What other families? Do you mean to say you enjoy your own family reunions?"

Molly laughed and colored, but she was game. "Well, when *we* get together we always fight," she said drolly, and Archie laughed again. "Oh, we enjoy the fighting," she added demurely. "Of course, you Carrolls wouldn't. You prefer to suffer in silence." He laughed again at this. ("What *are* they talking about up there?" thought the family. Suppose they had known!) "You see, my people are the kind who talk without thinking. The Carrolls think without talking. Your way is more polite, ours is more exciting."

"Naturally you think yours is the better way."

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"And you, that yours is the better way."

"Whereas, neither is the *better* way. They are merely different."

"But you could never get your family to admit that!"

"Nor yours," said Archie, and this time it was Molly's laugh that the perplexed family heard—and pretended not to hear.

"All of which proves nothing," said Molly.

"It proves everything," rejoined Archie. "It shows exactly why a large family can't have a good time together, when once it's got apart by marrying. We represent so many and such various family habits and traditions—no two alike, except in complacently thinking themselves the best."

"We could resolve all those differences or make a composite of them, if we only *talked*—expressed, not repressed, ourselves all the time."

"In other words, become like your family?" asked Archie twinkling.

Molly laughed and blushed. He had caught her neatly. "Dear me, Archie,

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you *are* something of an oracle, aren't you? If I'm not careful, I shall soon learn to like you, even though you *are* my brother-in-law."

"I've already begun to like you," he whispered gallantly.

"Good!" she returned triumphantly. "It's all because I made you talk. Aha! That's why you're no longer bored!"

She rather had him there. "That's so," he said, "I'm afraid I'm not." And they ended, laughing with the same civilized joy that comes in a sharp volleying rally at tennis between two well-matched players enjoying each other's skill too keenly to care much which wins such an interesting point.

By this time the whole family was alert and watching—though, of course, no one would have suspected it from their demeanor, except those who knew the Carrolls. It was a sort of rippling wonder like that of a stagnant pool awakened by the whisperings of the coming storm.

Even the absorption of the engaged couple was penetrated. They stopped thinking

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about the loggia into which they meant to disappear after dinner, and exchanged glances which meant, "When *we* are married *we* shall never want to whisper and laugh with any one but each other." Young Harry, the naughty boy, also observed, and also disapproved. His brothers always seemed tiresome when talking to women.

The only ones at the table unmoved were Uncle Thomas and Father Carroll, but they really did not need stirring up, because they were already perfectly happy. The former was telling Sophia with great relish what a certain distinguished Carroll ancestor had said to Lafayette and what Lafayette said to him. As for Dr. Carroll, he was still beaming contentedly, though rather sleepily now, as he asked, "What do you suppose they will name her?" He had hopes, dear old boy, of Sarah's deciding on Margaret. It had been his wife's name.

Now, at the other end of the table were Molly's husband Fred and Archie's wife Julia. She was the one on whose account

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the family considerately avoided references to second marriages, of which the female members of the family severely disapproved. Julia would not have minded the references or the disapproval in the least, but the palpable attempts to cover both sometimes annoyed her. She was a pretty, frivolous woman, exquisitely dressed, but felt choked by the lack of air, sparkle, and gayety of the world she was accustomed to. She and Fred, naturally, had been among the first to be awakened by their spouses' unprecedented conduct, so unbecoming in a Carroll. Husbands and wives are apt to glance at each other frequently at family reunions. Julia caught Fred at it, and Fred caught Julia at it so often—and Julia tried to show Fred, and Fred tried to show Julia, so persistently that each thought nothing of it—that it became almost laughable, and indeed they might have laughed had it been anywhere but at a family reunion. Finally, it reached a pitch where even the Carroll reserve was burst. So, "Isn't it outrageous?" remarked Julia in her indo-

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lent manner, "the way my husband is making love to your wife."

She had hoped to shock him, but Fred swung into position with surprising alacrity. "But it's nothing," he said, "to the shameless way my wife is making eyes at your husband."

And these two, in turn, looked at each other with new eyes, almost with interest.

"But I really can't blame Archie," said Julia with some enthusiasm, "Molly is so very good-looking."

Fred liked that so much more than her praise of his canvases. "Still," he remarked reflectively, "it isn't as if he were obliged to come to *my* home for that sort of thing."

It was the first compliment he had ever paid her, and it wasn't much of a compliment at that, but she approved of his trying, at any rate. So she smiled indulgently at him and said, "Oh, I've known artists before!" She knew them! (Even if she did call painters "artists," which Fred and his crowd did not fancy.)

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Fred saw the indulgent smile. It piqued him. He didn't want her to think that this was the best he could do. He wasn't warmed up yet. The machinery creaks when it has been out of use. Meanwhile he bestowed upon her a rather authoritative glance of appreciation, being an artist. She *was* good to look at—somehow he hadn't realized before quite how good. He intimated as much.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed to encourage him. "I had no idea you could be so nice." It was an affected tone, but Fred did not mind that so much now; for she shot such a brilliant smile as she said it, the kind she ordinarily employed when dining out in town.

Thus also these two lumberingly got under way. It was rather lukewarm badinage, but it was better than ingrowing thoughts, so they left off their repeated questions about their offspring.

Alas! this, also, was observed by the perplexed Aunt Bella, but as their manner was more open and less confidential, it

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was to the other end of the table that the good lady's glances more frequently wandered. It would be too much to say that she was shocked. There was nothing to shock, even her—as yet. But she did not like it. It was not what she was accustomed to. It was not "like us." Therefore it must be wrong.

Archie had been quoting Mr. Chesterton to Molly. "Oh, it's easy enough for Chesterton to say the 'family is a good thing because it is uncongenial,'" she rejoined, "but he never had to dine with *this* family. What good does our uncongeniality do us! We don't allow it to do us any good. We cover it up. We pretend there isn't any. We're all so afraid of saying something some one else won't like that we don't say anything. So we miss all the 'romance'—as he calls it—of family life, meaning the fighting, and just slump! Sitting around looking sweet and refined and becoming unutterably bored and getting nothing out of it except mutual contempt and a loathing for family parties.

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I'd a good deal rather have my feelings hurt once in a while than be bored *all* the time."

Archie thought her quite delicious when she unconsciously mimicked the Carroll repose. "All the same," he said, "deep down under all this emotional repression there is plenty of real feeling and fondness. We simply don't know how to express it. We're all so afraid of vulgar exposure of the feelings. But let death or disaster," he went on, "come to any of us and you'll see the inherent kindness and the essential unity of the family butting in through the icy reserve and the superficial uncongeniality and everything else."

"Yes," said Molly, "you really seem to let go and enjoy yourselves at funerals. Sorry I couldn't arrange one for you."

"Any other hard luck would do quite as well. Some impending disgrace would be better yet—it lasts longer. They would all rally around to avert it. There's nothing like a family skeleton for keeping alive the family spirit."

"But, of course, you have nothing of the

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sort in your clean, Carroll closets. You are all so horribly good. Now, if it were only my family—oh, I could rattle a few bones for you!"

"There you go," said Archie dryly, "boasting about your own family again."

Molly laughed appreciatively. "Well, make a skeleton of your own, then!"

"What would you suggest?"

"You might have tried drinking too much," she said reproachfully, as she arose to lead the ladies away to the living-room, "but it's too late now."

"Too *much!*" jibed Archie with a glance up and down the dry table, as he drew back her chair.

Again she laughed intimately. "I forgot," she whispered with a shrug. "Aunt Bella, you know!"

He knew, and he blessed her inwardly for sparing his aunt's feelings. "It's your party," he whispered in her ear as he took a step toward the door with her, "your house, your closets—you are the one to supply the skeleton."

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Then they laughed gayly and separated, not dreaming that they had already begun a charming little skeleton together—only a counterfeit one, to be sure, but if properly manipulated it might answer the worthy purpose almost as well.

IV

While the men were still smoking and laughing as much as possible at one another's stories, Archie arose and left the room in his abrupt manner. He didn't feel like attempting the illusion just now. The muscles of his cheeks were already somewhat fatigued from having performed his full share of forced smiles during the day. Besides, he wanted to talk to Molly. As is usually the case, after a discussion he thought of several good points with which to floor her.

As Archie did not smoke, his exit caused no remark among the men. But when he joined the ladies, now pleasantly engaged in discussing their children's ailments, he made

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straight for Molly and drew a chair close to hers.

A sudden silence greeted this astonishing spectacle. Aunt Bella was the first to recover. "I think we shall have rain," she said, averting her eyes.

"Yes, it feels like a storm." It was the first time Sophia had ever agreed with Aunt Bella.

Undoubtedly Molly had looked up with welcoming interest when Archie approached. The ladies had seen her eyes brighten. One of them being in the shadow, could not resist the shameful temptation to glance at Archie's wife. But Julia looked indifferent. (She, poor girl, would have to keep on discussing adenoids and modified milk for a while longer.)

Now, it was quite impossible to talk the family over with the family so near by—and apparently so willing to listen to what one had to say—so Archie twiddled his thumbs nervously. This, too, was noticed and considered. Presently Molly arose to poke the fire. Then, as if by preconcerted design,

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she and Archie retreated to a distant window seat and began talking in low tones, Archie smiling eagerly and bending forward to look into her eyes. Aunt Bella's virgin bosom rose and then fell quakingly. She had feared as much!

Archie's suspiciously gallant attitude and suspiciously whispered tones were for the purpose of making the following flirtatious declaration: "The trouble with you, Molly, is that you look upon the family gathering as a social function. It's a religious ceremony. It isn't meant to be enjoyed."

"And the trouble with you, Archie, is that even you, in this generation, can't help regarding everything enjoyable as *per se* bad. Therefore, to be good, a thing must be disagreeable. For my part I don't believe in keeping up even religious ceremonies unless they are more than ceremonies. I want to enjoy them. There has got to be real feeling in my worship or else it's not worship at all, but sacrilege. That's why I don't go to church."

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They fought it out on this line for several congenial minutes.

"Molly, when did Fred do that charming Sicilian boy?" This from Aunt Bella, much interested, apparently, in a sketch she had never noticed before upon the book shelves.

Molly replied absently: "The last time we were in Sicily, Aunt Bella," and went on talking to Archie.

It seemed odd that she did not even try to disguise her interest in her husband's brother. "It is a beautiful head," remarked Aunt Bella, and the other ladies affably agreed with her. Molly apparently was too much absorbed to hear.

Presently she excused herself to go up stairs for a look into the nursery.

Aunt Bella breathed a sigh of relief.

"She is such a devoted mother," said Sophia with unwonted enthusiasm. Sophia was a devoted mother herself, so she ought to know.

"And wife," put in Aunt Bella, with a

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glance at Archie. It was almost a vulgar exposure of enthusiasm, but the situation demanded it.

This did not interest Archie, so he scowled and said nothing. They saw the scowl. They remembered it later. At the moment they were all watching his face in suppressed excitement. For he now heard Molly's returning footsteps on the stairs. His eyes brightened. He was sauntering out into the hall! He was meeting her! Together they were stepping into the secluded studio! (So they would not be interrupted again.)

Several of the ladies now began to talk at once to show they had not noticed anything. One of them remarked upon the charm of the open fire, another upon the excellence of Fred's work, and a third upon the fact that the men were smoking an unusually long time this evening. Perhaps they were anxious for the approach of calm, masculine judgment. Perhaps they were dreading Fred's arrival.

The only ones in the room who did not go through these motions and emotions were

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Archie's wife, the worldly Julia, who was biting her lips to keep from smiling, and Aunt Bella's unworthy namesake, who wanted to be worldly but didn't quite know how. She was keenly interested and welcomed with relish the supposed flirtation. It gave her new hopes for her hopelessly prim and provincial family. She was the one who, a few minutes before, had been so inconsiderate as to steal a glance at Archie's wife. And now, with the heartlessness of the worldly minded, she did so again. Their amused glances met, fled, returned and rested upon one another for a moment. . . . And in that moment these two became understanding friends instead of misunderstanding sisters-in-law.

At this point the men came in, with quite the air of having had a jovial half-hour over the cigars and coffee—their approach being heralded by one of Aunt Bella's orthodox exhibitions of forced-draught animation. Quite unnecessary, because the men observed nothing amiss. Men are notoriously obtuse in such matters. The old gentleman

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made for Fred's deep leather chair and straightway went to sleep. Fred made for Julia's corner and went on from where he had left off with her at dinner. The others sank down into the places fate provided for them and wondered how soon they could decently go to bed.

Presently, in a natural pause, Fred asked Julia where, by the way, were Archie and Molly.

"Ask Aunt Bella," suggested Julia mischievously.

Fred did so.

The answer came unhesitatingly. "Molly is showing him the new portrait you have made of her, I believe." For, of course, Aunt Bella had prepared for this emergency.

When presently the suspected pair returned to the fold, the inevitable and obvious happened. Fred, forgetting to conceal his artist's eagerness, said, "Well, what do you think of it, Archie?"

"Think of what?"

"The head."

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"What head?"

"The head of Molly."

Archie, somewhat puzzled, turned and looked at Molly's hair. "I think it's beautiful," he said boldly.

"Fred's portrait of Molly, Archie," put in Aunt Bella hurriedly.

"Oh, I forgot to show him that," said unegotistical Molly.

This statement was followed by a pause and a vague feeling of unrest.

"Well, what were you doing in the studio, then," asked Fred a little piqued. It was the artist in him and not the husband that spoke. The family noticed the tone, misunderstood the source.

"Oh, we were just talking."

"What in the world were you talking about all this time?" put in Julia brazenly. Such an unreserved betrayal of wifely suspicion was rather jarring to those members of the family who were really suspicious—but when a woman is jealous she forgets all else, poor thing. The family considerately avoided looking at poor Julia. They were

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gazing at Archie, waiting for his incriminating reply. But he made no reply at all, and that was incriminating enough. But in addition he shot a glance at Molly, knowing how she would appreciate the humor of being questioned about the subject of their studio conversation—by the family itself. This look was still more incriminating. The affair was becoming serious.

The apparently casual gaze of the family now shifted searchingly to Molly.

"We were talking about all sorts of things," she said with an almost invisible smile at Archie.

Almost invisible, but every woman in the room saw it. Every one of them misinterpreted it, except Julia, who knew her husband too well to dream of *his* flirting with anybody. She wished he would do so. It would improve him.

"Poor Fred!" thought Aunt Bella, scandalized.

"Poor Julia!" thought Sophia, horrified.

"Clever Molly!" thought young Bella, admiringly.

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"Dear Herbert!" thought the young fiancée, sentimentally.

None of the men saw or thought anything. They did not dream that there was a skeleton in the family closet. But the door was now ajar.

There seemed to be a unanimous desire among the feminine guests to go to bed early this evening—or rather to retire, for even in the twentieth century the Carrolls still retired when Aunt Bella was around, though they had learned to say leg in her presence without being made to feel that they ought to blush.

"A railroad journey and a change of air —they always make one sleepy," remarked Sophia, who seemed to be coming to the fore midst the storm and stress of these stirring events.

There was undoubtedly a decided change of air, but the reason the wives wanted to retire was to get their husbands off alone and tell them all about it. For that was the way gossip percolated in the refined Carroll family. None of them went to sleep for hours.

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The astonishing news was reported and received in various manners. The architect roared with laughter, sceptical but interested—as his wife knew he would be. He was a noisy fellow when removed from the family atmosphere. "What! Archie? Well, well! I didn't think it of him. The old sport!" He had always considered Archie a prig, and had frequently felt a secret desire to take Archie out alone some evening and get him very tight. So many strange, unutterable thoughts occur to brethern dwelling together in unity.

"It's all Molly's doing," said the younger Bella. "She's leading him on without his knowing it. She's a clever little thing. You've observed that she has a twinkle?"

He had not—but he secretly resolved to look for it on the morrow.

Sophia's report to Roger, the professor, was given with less amusement, yet with considerable relish in her tones of regret. In their little academic world they were not given to flirtations, even such innocent ones

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as she firmly hoped this to be. Her ideal was sweet, womanly absorption in her husband and "the department." But Roger counselled Sophia that Archie and Molly were merely silly, not horrid, as Sophia was inclined to believe. She always thought as he did on every subject, so hereafter she would think it merely silly.

However, they all had something to look forward to with interest on the morrow, and when at last they went to sleep it was with the pleasurable anticipation that even if Sunday did prove to be a rainy day, as Aunt Bella predicted, the family party would not be the usual bore.

The only ones not too excited to fall asleep early were those who caused the excitement. But even they, as had been noted, had found new interest in the family party, and they, too, indulged in the luxury of conjugal confidences.

"Well!" said the host to the hostess, "it seems to be going all right after all! What got into them this evening?"

"I'll take back all I ever said about

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Archie," declared Molly impulsively. "I love him."

"I always said you would," Fred replied with a younger brother's pride. "He's not a bad sort when once you know him, even though he does use big words. You see," he added in extenuation, "lawyers have to throw a bluff. It's part of the game."

She told him what she and Archie had used big words about.

"But that isn't the strangest thing," she went on, "he likes *me!*"

Fred saw nothing strange in that. He merely thought better of Archie for it. "Every one likes you," he said, "when you give 'em a chance. Why, they couldn't keep their eyes off you this evening, and Aunt Bella fairly hugged you when she said good-night."

"Oh, that's only because she's so fond of *you*, Fred," Molly returned. "When I took her to her room she said the most delightful things about you. It sounded almost like an obituary. I'm beginning to believe they appreciate you after all. By

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the way," she added just before going to sleep, "you and Julia seemed to be hitting it off better than usual."

"Yes, I began by handing her a few bouquets—big broad ones. But she's not such a fool as I thought. She's a nice, sensible girl underneath, and lots of fun. By the way, she seems to admire you a good deal." For, it is a pleasure to observe, everybody seemed to be liking everybody else more than usual.

And so with the soothing sense of success, the host and hostess took their well-earned rest.

Archie and his wife, who were quartered at the country club owing to the limited capacity of Fred's house, pretended to tease and to be teased on the way back in the automobile, a harmless diversion often enjoyed by married pairs. "But seriously, that girl can talk," said Archie.

"That means, she listened to you talk, I suppose," laughed Julia. "I noticed that you were working your impressive manner pretty hard."

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"She has ideas," maintained Archie.

"She has eyes, at any rate," smiled Julia.

"What were you trying to do with Fred," rejoined her husband—"your usual game?"

"Don't worry. Your little brother can take care of himself. He's by far the best of the Carrolls."

"No," said Archie, "his wife is."

All of which was helping the cause.

V

Now dawned a memorable day in the annals of the illustrious Carroll family. To Molly's surprise the entire household was down promptly for breakfast. They were all afraid they might miss something. Archie and his wife, to be sure, remained at the club, but it is a significant tribute to the skeleton that, despite the absence of two of the leading parts in the veiled comedy, even breakfast was interesting.

The architect was there to see the twinkle. His wife was there to see whether Molly knew she was suspected of using it.

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Sophia was there to be shocked and thankful that she was devoid of such evils. Roger was there to watch poor Fred. Aunt Bella was there to watch everything.

Such were their intentions—but these were their results:

The architect could not, as it happened, locate the twinkle; Molly's eyes were pretty well occupied with coffee cups. But he amused himself by looking around at the rest and wondering what Aunt Bella thought about it. His wife, in turn, could not tell whether Molly knew she was suspected; therefore she admired the highly finished art, the woman-of-the-world ease of this hitherto unappreciated sister-in-law. Roger could not tell from Fred's demeanor whether he wanted brotherly sympathy or not, therefore he decided to cultivate Fred and find out, for the family was "the unit of the state." Sophia gazing with guileless horror at Molly's calm assumption of innocence, could not understand such hypocrisy in a wife and mother. Therefore Aunt Bella, watching everything, saw Sophia's face and

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forgave her, at last, for marrying Roger. Molly, finally filling her own cup, looked up and caught the young Bella's admiring glance. Therefore she forgave her for being so strenuous in her pose. The architect noting Fred's wholesome appetite, decided that he was a good sport and almost forgave his bad taste in the choice of architects.

Even for a full-grown, able-bodied family skeleton this would seem to be a pretty good Sabbath day's journey, though breakfast was not yet finished, and this was only a small, make-believe skeleton.

A note arrived at the breakfast table for Molly. She, being busy with the second cups and important questions as to lumps and cream, allowed it to remain a moment unopened by her plate. Now, it is easy to believe that no one intended to look and recognize the bold handwriting on the envelope, but it cannot be denied that every one near enough did so, as all the rest knew by the quick way they averted their eyes again. Moreover, from the grave, expressionless look of those eyes the whole family

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were apprised of the fact that Molly had a note from Archie, as clearly as if she had mounted her chair and proclaimed it.

It was furthermore obvious that Archie had made an appointment with her, because she declined to accompany the others to church. For in the Carroll family they never asked, "Are you going to church?" but merely, "How much time should we allow to get there?"

There was nothing to do about it. To speak of the matter would only proclaim themselves suspicious, and each would rather die than do that. But all, now watching everything with breathless interest, perceived that at last even unsuspecting Fred was becoming aroused. They could tell that from the look he gave her when she made the announcement. As a matter of fact, Fred *was* disappointed in her. He had carefully looked up the local Unitarian church, rented a pew in it for the occasion—in order to spare his aged father's feelings—and he had counted upon Molly's being there to watch him lead the

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family up the aisle with the air of doing it all his life. But when she showed him the note, later, he agreed with Archie that a spin in the latter's car would be a beneficial diversion from the nervous strain of entertaining the whole family—and that by no means should she tell the family that she was going motoring on Sunday.

"He is behaving very well about it," thought the ladies, observing poor, dear Fred's face as he started off to church with them—without his wife.

Julia also behaved very well about it. Archie, the wretch, sent her to represent his branch of the family at church, and she seemed to be sweetly, silently suffering, quite like a real Carroll, though she was only an "in-law." Incidentally, she was very smartly dressed, and the family felt no less proud of the heavenly forbearance by reason of the worldly sensation she created as she came down the aisle.

But when the family sedately returning from church and discussing the sermon on the way, as was the custom, were almost

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run down by Archie in his Fiat with Molly at his side, the situation became acute. Guilt was written large upon their shamed countenances. And no wonder, for it was impossible to turn around in time, and though they broke the speed limit in order to dodge down the nearest side street, the family caught them breaking the Sabbath just as they turned the corner.

This episode put a new complexion on the matter. The family skeleton was threatening to stick his head out of the home. This would never do. Even the younger Bella looked grave as she walked home in silence. If it were a flirtation at any other house-party she might have kept up her worldly pose of detached amusement. But with the best of intentions one cannot shake off one's innate feelings. The sight of her own brother dashing madly through a quiet village street with another man's wife, and that man also a brother, opened up to her vistas of possibilities which no longer seemed merely amusing. It is difficult to regard one's family in the comic

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spirit when a tragedy is impending—no matter how provincial the family may be. After all, one's own family is the nicest in the world. She became a Carroll once more—so unsteady her pose!

She spoke to her husband about it when they reached their room. He did not laugh at her. "They'll get themselves talked about!" he said, and he went down-stairs and gave Harry, his youngest brother-in-law, a cigarette from a feeling of family unity. Heretofore he had always snubbed the youngster.

Harry, too, was feeling that something was wrong. To be sure, he "had lived," and considered himself a devil with the women, but he had a high ideal of conventional good form—even where the family name was not concerned. Archie was going too far, and Archie was old enough to know better. A similar feeling of apprehension ran through the rest of the family. The sense of common peril had awakened the clan spirit at last.

So, after luncheon, where Archie and

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Molly were convincingly silent (being drowsy after their spin in the frosty air), the family, as if by tacit consent, combined as a unit to keep the guilty pair apart.

This was quite unnecessary, because, though the two had become friends for life, they were pretty well talked out and a bit tired of each other for the time being. So they were rather relieved to find fresh partners for the walk proposed and arranged by Aunt Bella, it being as right to walk as it was wrong to motor on the Sabbath day, though walking would seem to be more in the nature of work, forbidden by the fourth commandment, than was motoring—which, however, was more enjoyable and therefore perhaps more heinous.

Though the family efforts were unnecessary they were nevertheless good for the cause. The various individuals were working together to their mutual satisfaction for a common family purpose, and showing one another unsuspected depths of family feeling and not a little tact and finesse. Not once was the object of their zealous efforts

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named aloud, but whatever happened now they could never again be as thorougly unappreciative of one another as in the old dreary days of their unacquaintance.

VI

The dénouement arrived with dinner. Molly, down-stairs before any of her guests —even those who had neither husbands nor wives to discuss important matters with while dressing—met Archie and Julia arriving from the club.

"We came early," they explained, "in order to send off that hat-trunk you lent us for the children's Christmas presents." They were leaving for town immediately after dinner, and wished to be rid of their impedimenta. Molly remarked that they would find it, already packed, in the studio.

"Then," said Archie, "let's all three of us run down to the station with it." The car was still chugging outside. "John is a good chauffeur, but a stupid courier. Come, we can get back in three minutes."

Molly agreed, and ran upstairs for her

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wraps. But Julia, enjoying in her daily life more of motoring and of Archie than did Molly, preferred a magazine by the warm library fireplace. "You can manage it all without me," said the lazy Julia.

By the time Molly returned with her wraps, Aunt Bella, not being obliged to talk while dressing, was leaving her room.

"Hurry, Archie," called Molly, hearing the approaching footsteps.

But they were too late. As Archie hastened out of the studio, carrying the borrowed hat-trunk, Aunt Bella appeared before them upon the landing of the stair. She heard the automobile outside panting impatiently. She saw Molly dressed in a long fur coat and veil. She saw Archie beside her at the door, his coat collar turned up. In his hand was the hat-box—on it she saw Molly's initials gleaming in the hall light. She "saw it all now." She was just in time. Archie's other hand was on the door-knob.

"Where are you going?" she asked wonderfully achieving a light manner.

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The discovery of the skeleton in the Carrolls' closet

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They turned, not greatly surprised, and looked up at their aunt. "To the station," answered Archie simply.

"To the station!" echoed Aunt Bella aghast. "And you?" she asked Molly with suppressed emotion.

"I'm going with him." Surely even a Carroll conception of Sabbath observance would permit this. There may have been a slight note of defiance in her tone as she said "I'm going with him."

"Why?" asked Aunt Bella. She descended the few remaining stairs. "Why?"

"Because he asked me to." Molly looked at Archie. They both felt an unaccountable current in the atmosphere.

"I'll take you along, too, Aunt Bella," said Archie lightly, "if you'll get your wraps."

"No," said Aunt Bella. They were not to elude her so easily—while upstairs getting her wraps!

"Then, come on, Molly. There's no time to lose."

"No," repeated Aunt Bella. "Molly will remain with me, I think." She now

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stepped between them. "Here come the others," she whispered, glancing again at Molly's baggage, hoping that Archie would hide it. Her proud old Carroll bosom was heaving.

"I still think we can make it," said Archie, looking at his watch. He did not hide the little trunk.

"No," said Aunt Bella, almost inaudibly this time. "No, Archie," and looked from one to the other. There was an awkward pause. They stood looking at one another wondering. Some of the family had come and more were arriving upon the landing of the stairs—an excellent point of view for the tableau: Archie and Molly in furs, looking guilty; Aunt Bella before them with her back against the door looking determined; the automobile outside panting eloquently. They also "saw it all now," including the large initials.

"What did I tell you!" gasped Sophia in her husband's ear. His arm went around her.

"Great Scott! Just in time!" whispered the architect to the younger Bella.

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"Where is Herbert?" gasped the frightened fiancée.

"Here comes your father," pleaded Aunt Bella.

At this point Archie's wife, the lazy Julia, strolled out from the library with a book in her hand, saying in her indolent manner, "Oh, Archie, dear, we forgot to put in this *cunning* little fat Bible Aunt Bella gave little Archie." She stopped abruptly, seeing the silent assembled family before her. "Why, what's the matter?" she asked handing Archie the Bible.

"Nothing," said Archie in the true Carroll manner, as opening Molly's hat-trunk he disclosed to the family gaze their various appropriate presents to his beloved children.

"Nothing," said Aunt Bella, sinking into a chair and fanning rapidly.

"Nothing," said Molly, becoming a Carroll at last, but hiding her face all the same to hide her irresistible laughter.

"Nothing," "Nothing," "Nothing," echoed all the Carrolls and Carrolls-in-law.

"Dinner is served," said an entering maid.

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"Aunt Bella," said Archie with an odd look on his face as he offered her his arm, "you were quite right, you see. There would not have been time to run to the station and back."

"That's just what we wanted to tell you," said the other Carrolls, and each nodded and cast triumphant glances at all the rest—except their spouses—as if to say, "How dare you suspect anything else!" Then, laughing nervously, they all went out to dinner.

"But what was the joke?—what was the joke?" quavered the old gentleman, who had seen but little and heard less. "I've been watching you two with your heads together. What was it?"

Archie and Molly smiled at each other—but it no longer made even Aunt Bella quake.

"Oh, nothing," said Molly. "Archie and I have concluded that this is a pretty-well-united family after all."

"Humph," said the venerable head of the house, with the racial wisdom shown only by the very old or the very young, "I could

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have told you that. But what was he packing up in that box, eh?"

"Oh, that," she whispered, "was the family skeleton."

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THIRD PART

THEIR SHARE OF THE WORLD

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VIII

THEIR MILLIONAIRE TENANT

SCENES: The Carrolls' celebrated country place and the Parkers' expensive boarding-house.

(THE ACQUISITIVE SENSE COLLIDES WITH THE ÆSTHETIC SENSE—TO THE AMAZEMENT OF BOTH WORTHY CIVILIZERS. N.B.: THE CARROLLS FORMERLY OWNED THEIR HOME—NOW WE SEE THE HOME BEGINNING TO OWN THE CARROLLS.)

"BUT think of strangers living in our house! Using our pretty things, sleeping in our beds—why, the very thought of it is dreadful!" Mrs. Carroll shuddered and looked fondly about the beloved studio and out through the vista of soft-toned rooms, as mellow and sweet as if the house had found itself a hundred years ago.

"But, Molly, it's only for a week," urged her husband, "and we want to get away anyhow. I must go and paint those sand-dunes before the color changes. Besides, we always hate this place when the horse

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show is on at the country club. It's such a bore—none of the fun and all of the bother and expense of a houseful of guests."

"But we needn't have guests."

"Oh, we always say we won't have any people *this* time, but we always do. They like it and we like it, but it always knocks out my work. Busy men from town love to loll on the terrace and look at the view and tell me I don't know what hard work means, because I'm fetching 'em drinks at eleven A. M."

"Couldn't we close the house up, Fred, without renting it?" she asked. To her the home was a very personal matter—because she was a woman. To the man, it was chiefly a beautiful thing he had created—because he was an artist. Now he was interested in creating other beautiful things.

"Then where are we going to find the money for going away?" he asked. "You know how hard up we are. The house has put us in this hole; the house has got to pull us out." The man has, it seems, to earn money for his beautiful creations; the

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woman has to take care of them. The man won out in this case. For men are the natural leaders, as has been stated with the corroborative authority of many of them.

Now, if they had only referred the matter to an agent they would have saved themselves a lot of annoyance and have secured a great deal better rental. But the Carrolls were new at the business of letting houses and, moreover, they did not like the idea of putting their house in the market publicly. It seemed rather vulgar; Mrs. Carroll felt as if they were disgraced enough as it was. "Nonsense," said Fred, "I don't mind people's knowing that we're hard up. It isn't as if we were in business; there the measure of success is the amount of money you make; in my trade—some of the best are the least well off." Fred always reminded himself of this when hard up. It seemed to help in every way, except in paying bills.

All the same, Carroll took pains to mention at the club, "We are going away, anyhow—my wife hates the turmoil and fatigue

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of horse-show week—so if you hear of any nice people tell them that you know of a nice house with sixteen rooms and plenty of baths."

And Mrs. Carroll took pains to tell callers over her pretty tea-table, "We are going away, anyhow—Fred hates the turmoil and fatigue of horse-show week—so if you hear of any nice people tell them that you know of a nice house with sixteen rooms and plenty of baths."

Both of these "well-bred" young humans, though of somewhat different stock, had been admirably educated to despise the ladder by which their more or less distinguished families had climbed to the rarified air of refinement—vulgar money-getting. Money-having is all right. But that is different. It gives you the power to make others labor for you, the position to look down, more or less sympathetically, upon those who do it. This ennobles you—provided you do not horde your money, but spend it beautifully and give back some of

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it generously to the poor, thus "keeping money in circulation" and offering an example of *noblesse oblige*. . . . Indeed, it is to be feared that even this well-mated pair, though they could not see it now, would eventually find themselves handicapped by a more important alliance than their own; namely, the amazing marriage of Christian and Privilege Ideals. Not a "soul-mating," alas! nor blessed, successfully, by any church worthy of the name of spiritual religion, since Christ drove the money-changers out of the temple; merely a common-law marriage, though the church has done its best to prevent the inevitable scandal, for the sake of the offspring of these outwardly smiling but inwardly hostile parents. We call the child Culture and have reared it respectably, despite its origin. He (or is it a she?) does interesting parlor tricks, gives us diverting recitations while Authority stands by to prompt him. When the governesses are out, however, his comic capers are more amusing, for he is an engaging little fellow, even though he is a

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bastard in the unpleasant eyes of Truth. Let us hope that the story of his illegitimate parentage can be kept from him, now that he has reached the awkward age and persists in asking embarrassing questions. He ought to be spanked and sent back to the nursery.

I

They thought it would be a woman, but it proved to be a man, a brisk young man with eye-glasses and an incisive manner. He introduced himself as secretary to Mr. Sterling, and he said he should like to see the house.

They had understood vaguely that prospective tenants liked to look at houses before agreeing to take them—even when they were unusually charming houses with sixteen rooms and plenty of baths. They themselves had always looked at houses before taking them in the old dreary days of renting; but they never before appreciated how it felt to have a business-like eye fasten upon their intimate possessions and ap-

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praise their worth. They felt that the young man was inwardly scowling at everything in sight and they felt almost indignant—the more so because he seemed to be urbanely endeavoring to conceal his contempt under an indulgent appreciation. As if such as he could appreciate their things!

"The ceilings are rather low, are they not?" asked the brisk young man with a gracious smile.

"Yes, very low," answered Carroll, also smiling as he recalled the fight with the architect to secure those low ceilings, "should you like to look at the bedrooms?" The ceilings were still lower upstairs. ("Don't you go up," he whispered apart to his wife, "it's bad enough for me to have to do this.")

But though Mrs. Carroll's pretty cheeks were flushed and she felt inclined to order the intruder out of the house, she was afraid that Fred might forget to show off the linen closet, her particular pride, so she tagged along behind, walking on tiptoe.

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Carroll, feeling like a guide at the Louvre, was saying, "This is the day-nursery."

"I see," said the young man.

"This is the night-nursery," said Carroll.

"I see," said the young man.

"And here is the linen closet," put in Mrs. Carroll.

"Ah, a fine, large one," said the young man. Even though he was a bachelor he ought to have been interested in such things as nurseries and linen closets, but to tell the truth he too was embarrassed. This was an unaccustomed job for Mr. Sterling's secretary—though, to be sure, in that confidential capacity he had been known (by himself and his employer) to put through certain stranger jobs than this!

Well, he went through all the other rooms, but instead of admiring her dainty curtains, Mrs. Carroll felt sure that he was making mental notes of the place where the children had set the rug on fire and of the evident fact that her dressing-table was, after all, pretty small.

The ordeal was soon over and the young

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man was down-stairs again with his hat in his hand ready to go.

"And—what did you say the rent was?" he was asking. At this point Mrs. Carroll fled abruptly.

Her husband cleared his throat and said, "Oh, I don't know—two hundred dollars ought to be enough, I suppose," feeling sure that the business-like young man would think it too much. For it was more than enough to pay for the sketching trip.

As a matter of fact, other houses which hadn't sixteen rooms and plenty of baths were renting for considerably higher prices. Carroll had failed to find this out, but the young man had not.

"Ah, I see," he said. "Well, I'll telegraph you Mr. Sterling's decision in the morning."

"By the way," said Carroll, "may I ask what Mr. Sterling it is?"

"Charles F. Sterling," said the other, and paused to watch the effect.

But there was no effect; because Mr. Charles F. Sterling, though a very great

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millionaire, was a very recent one—so recent that he had not yet begun gathering pictures.

"Ah indeed!" said the master of the house, feeling sympathetically that something, of the sort was expected.

II

The Carrolls had reached that stage of their married career when wedding gifts have become old and sparse. Accordingly they overdrew their account at the bank and invested some of the prospective two hundred dollars in a new set of china—the blue onion pattern, cheap but a favorite of theirs. "We need a new set anyway," said Carroll. "The maids and the children between them have nearly cleaned us out."

"And now they can't complain that they haven't enough dishes," said Mrs. Carroll with housewifely pride. "And we'll turn the key on the dining-room china closet so they can't get at great-grandmother Carter's Spode."

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"Why not hide them in the attic?" suggested Fred.

"Because then they couldn't see them!" said Molly, the shameless snob.

They were rather short also on dining-room chairs, since the children had taken to making automobiles out of them.

"This is a good excuse to get those in the window of the little shop in Fourth Avenue," urged Fred boldly.

"Do you think we can spare the money?" asked his frugal wife—but her eyes brightened.

"Our trip to the shore can't possibly cost two hundred dollars," returned the natural leader.

They got the chairs, and while making the purchase they happened to fall in love with a pair of the most charmingly tarnished candlesticks, a remarkable green which would tone in beautifully with the living room. To be sure, they already had dozens of candlesticks but none like these. They felt that they really needed them, especially as the antique dealer said that another cus-

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tomer was coming back for them next Wednesday.

"Now, unpractical people," Fred told his wife as they marched off with the candlesticks under Fred's arms, "would have been lured into buying that piece of jade, but *I* wasn't!"

Molly felt so pleased with his self-restraint that at the next old friend's shop they passed she purchased a dozen heavy Colonial cut-glass goblets. "The Sterlings will need more goblets than we have anyway," she said apologetically.

"Of course they will," echoed Fred defiantly. "We mustn't be skimpy. We know ourselves what it is to have a skimpy landlord."

As the momentous day approached there was a busy time in the Carroll house. Molly cut her engagement to pour tea at the club house and Fred had to stop work, for even the studio, the one untidy spot in the otherwise immaculate house, was being scrubbed and waxed and polished until it shone. Molly's regular staff was augmented

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by two extra cleaning-women—two hundred dollars would be more than ample to pay for this—and certain electric-light fixtures were repaired which had been allowed to remain out of order for months; perhaps in order to keep down the consumption of electricity.

"This is a great thing for the Carroll family," said Fred; "we not only get a profitable sketching trip out of the Sterlings but they are putting our house in such good shape for us. Nice Sterlings; pretty plutocrats."

"I am going to have everything ready well in advance," said Molly, surveying her work with considerable satisfaction, "and then disappear before they arrive. I am reconciled to their coming, because it means so much for you, dear—if I only don't have to see them. I hate them."

"And yet we really oughtn't to hate them," mused Fred, who was quite broad-minded; "they're giving us a chance to go and paint sand-dunes."

"But they are going to use our things!" Molly reminded him.

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"We invited them to do so," returned Fred judicially; so they aren't altogether to blame."

"I hate them all the same," said Molly obstinately.

"Molly," whispered Fred, "I do, too!" And for this unchristian sentiment Molly threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

III

Now, it so happened that the feminine members of the Sterling family, their days not being occupied in Wall Street, took it into their heads that it would be a good idea to run out in the car in the morning instead of waiting for the afternoon train, which would bring the old man and the other heavy luggage. They could lunch at the club and spend the afternoon on the links.

Mrs. Carroll, with an apron on and quite unconscious of the approach of the enemy, was caressingly dusting certain precious possessions never entrusted to the unap-

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preciative touch of the servants. There was, for instance, a mediæval salt-holder of marble, which they had brought back from Italy, an odd thing with interesting relief work worn almost smooth by countless generations of handling. They kept it on a table in the living-room, as a combination paper-weight and ash-holder, because the vague carving was very beautiful and shadowy with the reading-lamp shining down upon it. There was also a bit of Venetian mosaic work which, after holding together for centuries in Italy, was finding an American Boynton furnace too much for it. These and other sacred idols she was handling with the deftness and devotion displayed in bathing her babies. She was singing the same cooing song she sung to them.

Hearing an automobile snorting up the drive, she ran, still in her apron, to the door, expecting to see her brother, who often came out to play tennis, and lunched with them when he did so. Her smile of sisterly welcome changed to a look of con-

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sternation when she beheld three strange women in the tonneau of a new and shining car.

"Will you ask Mrs. Carroll if it would be convenient to let Mrs. Sterling leave some hand-baggage here until this afternoon?" asked the eldest of the three ladies. The ladies also looked new and shining.

"They think that I am a maid," said Mrs. Carroll to herself with an inward smile. "Mrs. Carroll is not at home," she said, feeling herself blush; "but you may, of course, leave your things."

They began handing them to her. This made her blush still more but she took them, smiling, but furious.

"Mamma," said one of the girls, "if they've gone already, let's get out and see what the house is like."

Mrs. Carroll put down the bags. "I believe Mrs. Carroll was not expecting you quite so early," she said, "the house is hardly ready."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," said Mrs. Sterling graciously, "we'll understand," and

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by this time they were descending, the man in front with the chauffeur, who afterward proved to be their steward, having jumped out to help them.

"Isn't it a cunning little house!" said one of the daughters, a great strapping girl, as she brushed past the small owner of the little house, who didn't find it little to take care of. (Sixteen rooms and plenty of baths.)

"Just like some of those lodges we saw in England," replied the other, not quite so strapping, girl. "See, they have vines and lattice windows and everything. Oh, there's a sun-dial, too. I want to look at the sun-dial." So she, at least, ran out again.

The others, however, had gone in and there was nothing for Molly to do but to follow meekly behind.

"It's real cosey," said Mrs. Sterling, looking about with a kindly expression, while Molly shuddered impotently. She particularly loathed the word "cosey" even without the "real," and even when not applied to her home.

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"Could we take a look upstairs?" asked the daughter.

"Mrs. Carroll would much prefer your waiting until she is ready to receive you," said Mrs. Carroll with that quiet dignity which made the tradesmen quake.

But the Sterlings did not quake; they had long since ceased to be afraid of servants, even haughty ones. "Oh, we won't mind its being tossed up," said Mrs. Sterling.

"But Mrs. Carroll will," said that lady decisively.

Mrs. Sterling knew a language which appealed to all servants, even the most superior. "Mrs. Carroll needn't know anything about it," she said, and, placing a coin on the newel-post under Molly's pretty chin, she marched serenely up the stairs, commenting on the pictures on the way.

For a moment Molly was too much astonished to speak, then turning to the man-servant, who was carrying in the wraps, "Remove that!" she commanded haughtily, pointing to the twenty-five cent piece on the newel-post as if it were a spider.

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"Remove that," she commanded haughtily

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"Sure!" said the man, and he removed it effectively. The grave respect of manner which he had shown toward his mistress had disappeared now that she had gone upstairs, and he ogled Molly with smiling impudence. Her indignation gave way to something like fright. She looked out into the dining-room lined with pictures of ancestors—but they couldn't have helped her even if they had been the originals instead of merely copies Fred had made of family portraits. She glanced up the stairs —but she couldn't appeal to those people. So in a panic she turned and bolted out of her own house.

Half way down the drive she met Fred returning from the village. He was whistling carelessly. "I've ordered three dozen coat-hangers for the plutocracy," he began.

"They've come!" she cried, wild-eyed and panting. "They're in our house—they're upstairs!" You might have thought that she referred to the Indians that had harassed some of those oft-mentioned ancestors of whom both Mr. and Mrs. Carroll were so

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justly proud. For had not Molly's gentle-born forebears killed off many of the heathen savages whom Fred's stern Puritan progenitors had failed to convert? Besides, both sides of the house had played a distinguished part in cheating and maltreating the lingering remnant, in accordance with the principles practised by Christian nations upon unchristian barbarians standing (upon their own land) in the path of true progress. Well, neither squad of worthy ancestry was here to guard the house of Carroll against this sudden raid of modern barbarians.

"So they took you unawares, eh?" laughed Fred. "Well, what of it?" Where are you going?"

"I'm going away—anywhere! I'll never come back."

"If that's the case," said Fred, "I'd take off my apron and put on a hat, if I were you."

"My hat's up there! *They* are there! And there's a button off my coat, too. They'll see it! They didn't give me time to

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sew it on." And she told him the whole story, but as Fred did not seem to take it very tragically she also was able to laugh by the time she had finished.

"We'll live it down in time," he said. "Suppose you give me that apron and I'll sneak around and give it to Laura. I'll tell her to get our things and bring them down to the Parkers'. We'll have to wait there till train time."

The Parkers kept a very respectable and rather expensive boarding-house across the meadow from the Carrolls. "Luckily our trunk has gone on ahead." The children, it may be added, had been shipped with the nurse to their grandmother's the day before.

A few minutes later Carroll joined his wife on the Parker porch. She was gazing nervously across the meadow at her beloved, now desecrated home. "Never mind," said Fred comfortingly; "think of the wonderful color on those dunes! Think of the fine walks and drives we'll have in the afternoons!"

"Let's take the first train," said Molly.

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"I want to get out of sight of the house at once. It's awful!"

"So do I," said Fred; "but we haven't got our money yet, and, you know, we've overdrawn our account at the bank!"

"Here comes Laura with our things," announced Molly, jumping up as the fat figure of the ancient negress waddled into view. "Perhaps they've sent the check by Laura. *We* always paid *our* rent in advance."

Laura had no check, but she had a message from the steward. He wanted to know how the kitchen range worked. Laura, not understanding that kind, said she would ask her mistress to come and show him. The Carrolls' cook had been sent away immediately after breakfast for a week's vacation (at full pay).

"Indeed, I'll do nothing of the sort!" declared Mrs. Carroll with a glance at her husband.

"Let him know it's a French range," said Carroll with a humorous twinkle, "the kind all the best *chefs* use."

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"And when their cook arrives," put in Mrs. Carroll, relenting, "if he doesn't understand it, tell him where he can find *our* cook."

"Who is Irish," remarked Fred parenthetically.

"By the way, Laura," asked Mrs. Carroll, hesitatingly, "I hope—do the ladies seem to like the house?"

"'Deed, m'm, I ain't heard dem say, but when dey looked in de studio dey begun laughin' fit to kill when dey looked at de picture Mr. Fred made of Miss Molly."

"Laughed, did they?" snorted Fred, sitting up; "what do they know about it!"

"'Deed, I don't know, suh," said the darky departing. "All I know is dat dey kept on gigglin'. 'Mamma's always makin' brakes,' said one of de young ladies to de other. Den dey goes off in de automobile. I don't know what dey meant."

Molly did. She looked at her husband. He broke out laughing; she blushed and bit her lip.

In a little while Laura came back again.

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She reported that the other servants had now arrived, a second man and three maids, and that the steward wanted to know if Mrs. Carroll would kindly give him the key to the dining-room china-closet, so that he could get at the rest of the dishes.

"Didn't you show him the whole set of new ones in addition to the old ones in the butler's pantry?" asked Mrs. Carroll.

Laura said that she had done so, but they were not good enough for the Sterlings. The servants were to use the onion pattern.

Fred laughed again, indulgently. "That's not a bad pattern, and that particular set has a good blue—I picked it out myself. But 'good enough' to the Sterlings means only one thing—expensive enough. The poor, stupid slaves."

"We can't let them have the Spode!" cried Molly, aghast, looking at her husband for support. She was not interested at present in the theory of "Conspicuous Waste" or "Honorific Display."

"Laura," said Fred, "those dishes belonged to a great-grandmother, and——"

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"Yessuh, I told him so, suh; but he says he don't mind dere being ole fashioned—it's only for a week."

Fred looked at Molly until even she laughed a little—just to please her husband. But the morning's experiences had put her out of humor, women being so personal.

"And he says," continued Laura, "he will replace all dey breaks."

"A dozen Mr. Sterlings could not replace those plates," broke out Molly indignantly.

"What'll I tell him, m'm?"

"Oh, let him have the keys," flung out Fred, for he saw how the distasteful situation was getting on Molly's nerves, and wanted to end it. "Let 'em have everything. What's the use of fighting the Money Power."

"And then Laura, please go home," put in Mrs. Carroll, resigning her sacred keys. "I don't want you to stay there any longer."

Laura looked at the ground. "I promised to stay and help 'em clean up. He says Mrs. Sterling's a most particular lady."

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"Clean up? Why, you've been cleaning up for three days!" cried Molly, outraged in her housewifely pride; "didn't you tell him that?" Her lip began to tremble.

"Well, no, m'm, he offered me two dollars to stay and—I need the money." Laura showed her white teeth in a broad grin. "But I told him," she made haste to add, wagging her head with the true negro retainer's loyalty, "that you was just as fine a lady and just as particular as his missus, even if you does sleep in a white-enamel bed."

"Now *that* ought to encourage you!" laughed Fred.

Molly looked at Laura. "What's this about the beds!" she asked.

"Nothin', only he says that at all de Sterlings' houses even de help has better beds den yourn. Dey are movin' yourn up to de servants' flo' for de steward to sleep in, an' de ole-fashioned four-poster is goin' to be for de missus."

"Laura," said Mr. Carroll no longer jocular, "tell that person, Mrs. Carroll's bed

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is not to be used by any of Mr. Sterling's servants—no matter how many he has!"

"Yessuh," said Laura chuckling. She always loved Mr. Fred when he "got mad." "An' don't you worry, Miss Molly, you're my people, an' I ain't agoin' to let dose new people hurt nothin' o' yourn," she added as she took her deliberate departure.

Somehow, Molly derived a great deal of solace from this. Along with the indignity of the situation, she felt that, at least, she had one thing that millions could not buy, and that was personal affection and loyalty from her servants.

In a little while Laura was back again.

"*Now*, what is it!" thought Mrs. Carroll.

"De steward, he's sot de second man to paintin' de scratched places de childern made on yore bed, m'm. Mrs. Sterling's a most particular lady, he says."

Molly made no comment but to drum on the floor with her foot.

"Well, what of it?" asked Fred sharply. The gossippy servant seemed to be distressing her mistress unnecessarily.

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"Nothin', only I thought I'd better tell you he's usin' yore paints, suh."

"What!" cried Fred springing out of his chair.

"He says he'll only use a few cents' worth and he'll pay double if you object. Dem's his very words."

"Object!" shouted Fred. "I don't allow anybody to monkey around in my studio, not even Mrs. Carroll. You ought to have told him that, Laura." It appears that men, too, at times, are "so personal."

"But he ain't doin' it in de studio. Dey turned yore studio into a *servants' dining-room!*"

This lack of art feeling caused Frederic Carroll, the promising young painter, to turn resolutely toward his beloved, now desecrated, home of art—but he was restrained by his wife. "Don't go near the horrid things," she implored him.

Fred hesitated, mopped his brow, sat down again, and smiled. "I was only wondering," he said in a changed manner, "if they wouldn't like the key to the trunk

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where our love-letters are. They might like them to start the fires with. They could easily pay double for what the paper is worth, couldn't they, Molly?"

But Molly did not laugh. The chagrin and horror of the whole affair swept over her, and tears welled up in her eyes. She might be able to live this down in time, as Fred had remarked, but she would never forget it. Life would never be as pure and sweet again.

"Never mind," said Fred, "the old man will arrive soon and then he'll send down his tainted money by Laura, and," he added, seeing that Molly refused to be comforted, "we'll stop off on the way through town and forget all about everything in a grand celebration—we'll have a bully dinner and then go to the theatre afterward." He leaned over and patted her hand. She was taking it too seriously. Therefore he took her too seriously. That's the trouble with these happy marriages. They're so wearing—too absorbing for busy men with work to do in the world.

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But though the old man came that evening, no check was sent, because his secretary attended to such trifling affairs, and his secretary was in town. So the Carrolls instead of dining grandly at the Plaza, ate a miserable dinner at the Parkers' and spent the night in a stuffy room there, the better rooms having already been engaged in advance by people arriving for the horse show.

The next day Fred said, "Shall I go and dun the old man?"

"Decidedly not!" his wife replied. "If *they* haven't decency enough to do the customary thing, *we* sha'n't put ourselves in their class by reminding them of it."

Fred said he failed to see the satisfaction in this feminine revenge, but as Molly was so nervous and unstrung he would humor her, hoping this would amuse her, and it did a little. She knew that he would rather be shot than dun his tenants.

They hung around the boarding-house all day. Fred's sketching materials had gone with the trunk down to the blessed dunes,

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and so he could do no work. Nor did they feel like going to the club, now that the horse show had begun, because they had told every one they were leaving town, and because Molly would be sure to run into Mrs. Sterling who had tipped her. So Fred took it out in reading the Parkers' paper-covered novels, and Molly in gazing resentfully across the meadow at her pre-empted house, where she could see the usurpers having tea in her cups on her terrace.

Now, like many of the immensely rich, newly or otherwise, the Sterlings were—disappointing though it might be to the Carrolls and other satirists—simple, kindly folk, who did not care a hang about being impressive or superior, except perhaps in the presence of older or greater wealth; then, to be sure, an interesting phenomenon invariably appeared. No smirking or kow-towing; the Sterlings were not that sort. They had the pride of natural (or unnatural) rulers of our land, conscious of their powers for gaining possession of it. But whenever in the embarrassing presence of our already

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established dynastic rulers, straightway, like a galvanic reaction, frills and foolishness arose stiffly upon the kindly Sterlings, like bristles upon the back of a good-natured dog in the presence of strange and bigger dogs. Being of good, plain American stock, given to loud laughter and practical jokes, they never enjoyed the uncomfortable sensation which accompanied the bristles. The Sterling daughters, having gone to the best schools—the most expensive things are always the best, or else how could they be the most expensive?—those big, healthy girls, who had had "all the advantages money can buy" could not help hating their poor old mother whenever she too made a well-meaning effort to give the illusion of refinement. And this, in turn, made them hate themselves, and drop their handsome eyes to hide this feeling, and that, of course, revealed it to their uneasy mother, who wondered what "break" she had made *this* time. As for the old man, if things in the Street had not been going as he wished, his fine daughters made him so sick with their

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expensively acquired accent, at times, that he was driven to drink, and then said such coarse, horrid things that afterward (when he had arranged matters to suit him in the Street) he had to buy them each a handful of diamonds, or something equally costly, in order to "make up"; for he loved them all devotedly, wanted them to have "the best of everything," saying (and believing) that this was why he enjoyed working so hard. No, unfortunately, though given to practical jokes, none of the Sterlings had much fun out of pretending to be what they were not (as yet). They hadn't even the artistic (or rather the academic) satisfaction of making a correct copy of some one else's art. But though little dogs know better, they can't keep those bristles down, even when the big dog trots serenely past, intent upon his own pursuits—without so much as seeing them. It's the nature of the brute. Later, as we may see, if Charles F. Sterling's wealth kept on quadrupling as at present he would be forced to go in for a social career seriously. Those rapidly

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plumping daughters would have to be supplied with appropriate husbands upon whom to bestow their fat fortunes and their sweet, wholesome persons. Then the old man would wake up and add to his already large retinue a couple of expensive social couriers, a male and a female one, and thus attain another ambition, with the business-like thoroughness so characteristic of the golden age of the greatest people civilization has ever had a chance to boast of. But as yet the simple Sterlings were diverted with the mere novelty of spending, which they were doing amiably and with a guileless wonder that certain of their old friends, for whom they were more than willing to do nice things, hated them for it.

They wanted to be comfortable and have fun with their money. They had looked over the Carrolls' house, saw that they would be comfortable in it, and were proceeding to have a lot of fun out of the horse show, where they had the honor and perplexity of meeting members of a conservative colony complacently regarding it-

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self as more exclusive and desirable than certain richer and more fashionable centres of which the Sterlings had read with mingled scorn and envy. They didn't know that the Carrolls hadn't been paid. The Carrolls didn't enter into their existence.

Having let the matter of the rent pass by a day or two, the Carrolls felt more reluctant than ever about bringing it to Mr. Sterling's attention. They did not care to do things of that sort. Besides, it would involve an explanation; and while they maintained that it was a matter of utter indifference to them if the whole world knew that they were hard up, being beautifiers of the world, not predatory exploiters of it (like some vulgar people) yet they "were not accustomed to explaining their actions" to *any* one! So they kept on hoping each day that their millionaire tenant would remember and send a check without being reminded. In short, the Carrolls spent horse-show week at the Parkers' expensive boarding-house, taking exercise only at

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night under cover of darkness, so as to avoid meeting their friends.

"Going to have something of an electric-light bill this month," Fred would say as they stealthily passed the brilliant house which belonged to them and whence issued music and laughter. But Molly would not look. She only sighed and passed by in silence to the dreary boarding-house.

A woman is always attached to her home, for isn't it her sphere, as has been well said? Man has never been completely attached. He merely pays for it, and that takes him out of it.

IV

Laura proved so useful to the steward that she was retained throughout the week. "De ole man, he's mighty pleased with our house," she reported to Molly, "so nice and cosey, he says. He asked de ladies how much did Charlie pay for it. Dat's de secretary. Dey didn't know, so he asked de steward, and de steward he say, 'Two hundred, I believe, suh.' 'A day?' asked de ole man.

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'No, suh, for de whole week.' 'Dat's a shame,' he says, sort o' cross. 'I'm a-gunter speak to Charlie about dis.' So, I spect we'll get more 'n any ole two hundred dollars, when it do come!"

"Indeed!" cried Molly, "the vulgar parvenus! As if we'd dream of accepting more than the stipulated amount!"

"Of course not," snorted Fred—and probably they would have declined, but they obtained more than the stipulated amount of satisfaction out of being indignant about it.

"I am bound to say," Molly added, "their unbusiness-like negligence has cost us much more than two hundred."

"I haven't earned a dollar since you began cleaning house for them," sighed Fred.

"Besides, there's all the vexation and annoyance," said Molly thoughtfully, "But if the pigs try to make us accept a cent more than two hundred," she added quickly, "we'll send it straight back." A pause. "Won't we, dear?"

"Of course," said Fred. Another pause.

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"I wonder how large an amount the pigs will try to make us accept."

They talked about this a good deal, having so little else to do. They decided that the check would be left for them in the house. Molly wondered in what part of the house. "On the newel-post," suggested Fred.

At last the dreary week was finished, and the Carrolls, restraining each other on the Parkers' porch until the last trunk had left, ran across the meadow hand in hand to their beloved home, their very own again.

"This makes it almost worth while," cried Molly rushing into the house and picking up one after another of her precious possessions, fondling them like long-lost children, talking to them, asking them if they had missed her. In justice to the pigs it must be stated that they had left their temporary sty in very good shape. Even Molly admitted that, grudgingly. None of the ancestral Spode was broken. But presently her husband heard a cry of alarm. "Fred, Fred!" she called, running out into

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the studio, "I can't find the mediæval salt-holder!"

"Well," said Fred, "I may as well tell you that my grandfather's portfolio is gone!" It was wonderfully colored, that piece of old leather.

They stared into each other's eyes.

"We ought to have known better than to leave such valuable things about," said Fred.

"Let's telegraph," said Molly.

Just then Laura, having heard the alarm, waddled in impressively. "Now, Miss Molly," she said sententiously, "don't you get so excited," and with that crossed the room with dramatic deliberation. "I reckon you-all didn't look in dese shelves where Mr. Fred keeps his drawin's," she said chuckling, and quietly produced the missing idols.

"Oh, Laura!" cried Molly gratefully, "how good of you to hide them for us!"

"Bless yore heart, honey, *I* didn't hide 'em. De steward he put 'em out o' sight because dey was too old and shabby for his

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people, he says. Mrs. Sterling is a mos' particular lady."

The Carrolls looked at each other and burst into laughter, and the longer they thought about it the more they laughed. If "a good laugh" is worth two dollars at a Broadway theatre a rebate was already due the generous Sterlings.

"And dose old-timey goblets you-all brought from de city? Dey was given to *de servants' table!*" shrilled Laura with a fat African cackle, worth at least a gallery seat, at the Sterlings' expense.

While continuing their tour of investigation Fred began to laugh afresh and directed Molly's attention to the mantelpiece in the living-room. There stood the new pair of old candlesticks, the ones whose rich green color had led them to the extravagance of the purchase. They were now as bright and shining as the brass-work on the Sterlings' yacht. The tone of time had gone. But progress should not be blocked and the desert must bloom for the larger good.

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"Well, it serves us right," said Fred, "for renting our house to such people."

"By the way," cried Molly, "the check!"

"That's so," he answered springing up, "the check!" and off they sped to search for it, like a pair of children. They had forgotten all about the check.

"Look in your studio!" called Molly who was looking upon her desk in the living-room. "That's your place of business, you know."

"Look on your bureau," shouted Fred, "that's where tips are usually left."

But it wasn't in any of these places nor on the hall table where the letters were usually left. At last they looked on the mantelpiece in the dining-room, and found not a check, but something that Molly had never seen in her sacred home before—a wineglassful of toothpicks. "Remove that!" she commanded Laura in the same horrified tone she had employed with the Sterlings' man servant.

It was not until after the first of the following month that they received their check. Fred passed it in silence over to Molly.

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"Why, it's only two hundred, after all!" she remarked.

"Well," said Fred, "that saves us the trouble of returning the balance."

"But I *wanted* to return it!" she cried. "Now we sha'n't have even that satisfaction."

Then they had another good laugh and went on with life where it left off before the attack of the Philistines.

V

They thought that ended the matter, but it did not. The set-back to Fred's work was a climax to many set-backs since he had established himself in the country. It was difficult to get models for his figure-work. He was losing touch with his friends and affairs in town. The Carrolls spent a month or two there in the winter, but that was hardly enough, though often too much for the children. He was not getting ahead in his work, he was getting behind. He was still doing illustrations at a time in

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his career when by the prognostications of his early critics he should have been doing nothing but masterpieces for museums or millionaires like Mr. Sterling. But while there were plenty of other young fellows coming along to supply spots of color in gilt frames for the homes of those who could afford such superfluous luxuries, there was no one else to supply food and clothes for the children in his own home. So though right to stick to illustrations, he sometimes thought it wrong to stick to the country. So did Molly. But they seldom talked about it. It was an awful thought.

Now, the old man was a very busy old man, and had forgotten to speak to Charlie. But the very next fall he remembered how much he liked that little house he had occupied during the horse show; was reminded of it by the ladies of the family, for they liked it too. Such being the case the Sterlings decided to buy it. They had no house, as it happened, in just that part of the world, and they might want to build a place out there. Meanwhile, and in any

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case, this little house, they agreed amicably, would do perfectly well. It would be convenient for the horse-show week, or if they ever wanted to go out and play golf there. Perhaps the old man sensed the future value of this bit of real estate. Perhaps the girls cherished a secret but worthy ambition of "getting in with" those "awfully nice people" who did not care much for frills.

So Fred received another call from the brisk young secretary. Charlie stated in a polite, business-like manner that Mr. Sterling was prepared to make an advantageous offer for the property, if it could be done quietly and without delay—and if Mr. Carroll didn't ask too much for it.

"Indeed?" said Fred, "I hadn't heard about my house being on the market."

"But it will do no harm to make you an offer just in private," said the smiling secretary. "You would not mind?"

"Not in the least," said Fred. "I'm sure it will be interesting, but I do not care to sell." As he spoke he glanced out of the window. The children were playing Indian,

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brown-legged, red-cheeked, merry, and content. There were no near neighbors to mind the noise.

"I understand, Mr. Carroll, I understand," said Charlie, thinking he did.

The secretary understood, through the steward, who understood through Laura, something about the Carrolls' predicament during horse-show week. Other inquiries had confirmed his original surmise, made when they asked only two hundred dollars rent for the week. It was clear that they were hard up, and it was shrewd to go direct to the unpractical artist, instead of dealing through a real-estate agent. For, however covertly and indirectly such approaches were made, the news often leaked out that Charles F. Sterling was the prospective buyer and straightway prices soared annoyingly.

"I am authorized," said the secretary, his beady little mouse-like eyes now fastening themselves on Carroll's face, "to offer you the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars cash for your property." When we "get

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down to business" we nearly always get a different look in our eyes.

A smile flittered about the corners of Fred's mouth. He was disappointed in "de ole man." This was not a liberal offer, but he did not like to tell the secretary so; it might hurt his feelings. "You are most kind," said Fred, "but—well, I don't care to sell anyway."

Evidently this artist was no fool; perhaps he, too, saw the real-estate future of the neighborhood. "Mr. Carroll," said Charlie urbanely, "usually these affairs are long drawn out. I am obliged to settle this matter at once and take the return train for the city." He glanced at his watch, "I am very busy to-day."

"I can sympathize with you," said Fred thinking of the canvases he was preparing for his exhibition next month on Fifth Avenue.

"Mr. Sterling told me that in order to close the deal at once I might give you thirty thousand dollars for your property."

"Did he, indeed!" said Fred, "that was

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very generous of him, but it's out of the question."

"It's five thousand more than the place cost," said the secretary in his business-like manner.

Fred resented this. "You are mistaken," he rejoined, "it is nearly six thousand more than it cost." This was merely to show that he, too, could be business-like when he tried. "But, you see, the great trouble is that I don't care to sell."

Charlie now regretted that he had not put the matter in the hands of an agent after all. But he had been told to get the house, and get it he would, or else receive a scowl of disapproval on his return to the office. A few minutes later he was offering Fred thirty-five thousand for the property, then thirty-eight, and, finally, "just to make it an even sum and close the deal," Fred was obliged to refuse forty thousand of Charles F. Sterling's hard-earned cash.

"I cannot tell you how flattered I am," he said, now drawing an exqusite amusement out of the situation, "to find my

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humble home so greatly admired by one of Mr. Sterling's means—and taste. Frankly, I had no idea that it could appeal to him so keenly, but——"

"You'll never get such an offer again," interrupted Charlie.

"I hope not," said Fred, "and I hope you'll soon stop this bidding up of the price. It may be business-like, but it makes me dizzy."

"That is my limit," said the secretary rising to go.

"Good," said Fred in sincere relief.

"I won't offer you a cent more," snapped out the other somewhat angry at Fred's flippancy.

"I am so glad," said Fred.

"Oh, come!" cried the exasperated secretary, "what is your price?"

"I haven't any."

"Do you want to sell or not?" demanded the secretary impatiently.

"Not in the least," laughed Fred. "I said so in the first place, you know." And just then the wild Indians without set up a

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treble war-hoop. It was a shout of triumph, the enemy had been routed.

Charlie picked up his hat. "I thought you were bluffing."

"That was *your* mistake. But in order that you may not make another one, just tell Mr. Sterling, with my compliments, that he hasn't money enough to buy this place."

"Why not?" asked the other, laughing at the artist.

"Because," said Fred, "he could never appreciate my house."

That was all right to say to Sterling; but behind it loomed a motive bigger than a house: formerly the Carrolls owned their home—now the home owned them. The rising generation was knocking at the door.

VI

At the exhibition of landscapes by Frederic Carroll, the following month, two-thirds of the canvases were snapped up during the first day of the sale. This made such a sensation that the rest sold quickly.

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"Frederic Carroll, the former illustrator, has undoubtedly arrived," wrote a well-known critic. Most of the canvases referred to were crated to the town house of Charles F. Sterling.

"And yet," said Fred swaggeringly to Molly, "some people say painters aren't practical."

"It's simply," quoted Molly applaudingly, "that usually there are more important things to think about."

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IX

THE CARROLLS' FORMAL GARDEN

SCENES: Fred's studio, Molly's mind, and the Carrolls' terrace.

(MRS. CARROLL THREATENS TO BECOME A NEW WOMAN, MUCH TO THE PERPLEXITY OF HER LOVING AND LOVED HUSBAND. THE CHILDREN AND OTHER CONSERVATIVE ALLIES STAND BY HIM, AND WE NEED FEEL LITTLE CONCERN OVER THE NET RESULT.)

I

WHEN Fred and Molly finished the building and furnishing of their celebrated country house there had been no money left for what they had always counted upon most of all—the garden. Though scarcely half as extensive as the "rambling old" manor house they had previously constructed in their dreams, it may be recalled, the placid little home they now lived in had innocently swallowed more than double the amount of their original "appropriation," as their

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combined available assets had been lightly termed by Wilson Peters, originally their trusted friend, subsequently turned their arch-architect, with whom they were at present upon a footing of noticeable politeness, far more formal than any garden of theirs would ever care to be.

For, when it came to the apportioning of their share of the world and the problem had reduced itself to a choice between a tennis court for Fred or a garden for Molly, they decided to compromise upon the tennis court. Exercise was a necessity, whereas gardening was a mere luxury. "Besides," as Molly added to clinch the matter, for she advocated the tennis court because she knew Fred preferred it, just as he insisted upon a garden because he knew how she longed for it—"Besides, I can play on the court, but you would *never* work in the garden." So Fred laughed and good-naturedly gave in, not willing to appear unreasonable in the matter. Wives are wonderful wheedlers.

Now, otherwise, as has already been recorded, the house had proved a notable suc-

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cess—"despite that man Peters," as Carroll would say, with a reminiscent smile at his wife, when week-end guests seemed to appreciate the Carroll estate or made a well-meaning effort in that direction by saying "so artistic!"

"The *good* features of the house were all Fred's ideas," Molly would always say in answer to his smile, readily recognizing her cue, as all true women should learn to do if they would succeed as wives, actresses, or in any other womanly sphere.

But though so eminently comely and comfortable, though as much like their dream of a house in the country as anything so grossly material and expensive as a house could hope to be, the house could never become a home, it seems, would remain a mere house, so long as it lacked an out-door room to smile back at the in-door rooms, a shadowy place, secluded, unimagined even, from the public road; a place to stroll in in the cool of the evening according to the precedent established in the Garden of Eden, and followed with some

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interruption ever since; a place to work in at play hours and mayhap to play in at what ought to be work hours.

A few flower borders Molly possessed, and plenty of shrubs, properly planted along the edges of things or massed in corners in accordance with the orthodox outlines of the landscape architect whom Carroll had employed—when that man Peters had at last finished making a mess—on the commendable principle of its paying "in the long run" to start right. ("We'll save money in the end by spending a little more now," said Fred, quoting the expert landscape opinion. "But do you suppose we'll ever reach the end?" asked Molly). Planting here and there, however correctly, however successfully, did not compose a garden. This was not an out-door room. These more or less interesting bits were not a structural part of the habitation. Indeed, some of Molly's more recent flower-beds looked rather lonely and detached, as if they were camping out —a very good thing in its way, Carroll said, but not the only way or the best for civil-

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ized living. The proper place for beds is within the walls of a room, even though a hammock or two outside will do no harm if placed unobtrusively.

Indeed, as the seasons rolled by and the Carrolls' vines and children grew, the truth was borne in upon Molly that this yearning for a garden was not a mere luxury, as she had supposed, but a necessity, an organic need of her nature; that her otherwise good and useful life could never be complete, that she could never "really live" until she had a garden. Some women feel the same thing as to children. She pondered the matter in her heart and wondered if her husband ever felt this void in their lives, but she did not like to broach the subject of her secret sorrow. He was a Carroll, and the Carrolls are all so reserved. It was such a delicate matter. We all have hidden depths in our natures where even our dearest dare not enter.

Now, as it happened, they had done very well in the way of children—or were doing, we might more accurately state, since they

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were still young and healthy parents—very well indeed, considering the present price of the necessities of life which a wise civilization allows young parents to pay for the privilege of supplying well-reared future citizens, and well-built country places to keep poor-lonely-old bachelors in over Sunday—not to speak of keeping them and all others not blessed by the Lord with children alive during the rest of the lonely week by supplying destructive consumers of our variously necessary or luxurious products.

By this time, indeed, nearly all the rooms hospitably designed for guests had been permanently appropriated by offspring—the impudent squatters. Perhaps if the Carrolls had not been so long on future citizens—but why should public spirit and private gardens go together? Race-suicide is an atrocious evil. We can condemn it openly now, even in mixed company, since the unpleasant topic has been decently clothed with a becoming phrase by an authority who has an independent income. Often the modern American woman was

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heartlessly reviled at "The Meadows" by bachelor guests—even the most refined—while their hosts listened, looking impressed with this properly indignant eloquence.

Frederic Carroll, watching solicitously, knew and understood what the noble woman who bore his name was suffering in silence; with mingled feelings of shame and tenderness, of sympathy and perhaps aversion he understood as well as a man can understand a woman's yearnings. So, in a man's blundering but well-meaning way, he would draw near, pat her hand tenderly and say, "Let's play tennis."

And it was noticed at such times that he was very thoughtful and solicitous, serving easily to her and cheating himself conscientiously in the score, quite as during their honeymoon, years and years ago.

Yes, sometimes she felt that he understood. Once she had caught him surreptitiously measuring off spaces on the sloping lawn below the south terrace, and when she asked him, as women will, "What are you doing, dearest?" he had started, an-

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swered gruffly, "Oh, nothing darling," and hid the tape measure. And one day when, supposed to be out upon social duties, she entered the studio unexpectedly, her heart gave a great bound of primal joy, for there upon the easel (where he was supposed to be turning out a money-maker) she beheld the very vision of her dreams—a silent, silvery pool gleaming in twilight shadows, reflecting serenely a pair of stately cypresses in the background, one a little taller than the other; a broad flight of easy steps in the foreground, half hidden in the shadow, a little crumbling perhaps at the edges, half choked by flowers at the bottom; and surrounding it all an old stone wall, very tall, very mellow, nearly hidden by vines and completely covered by the tone of time, as Frederic Carroll could suggest so well, so much better than any painter of his day.

"What's that you are taking down?" asked Molly, framed in the doorway in her calling clothes. She tried to make the question sound casual, unemotional. To have

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remained silent would have been more significant, embarrassing.

"Oh, nothing," said Fred with the well-known Carroll reserve. He was blushing furiously. He hid the canvas abruptly in a drawer and turned the key, quite as once long ago when he had come upon Molly in the sewing-room she had abruptly hid some of her "work" in a lowest bureau drawer, also blushing furiously, only she had laughed on that occasion and he did not on this, for he was a Carroll. She had taught him to talk, but there were times when he could not be made to smile, except at jokes.

"It looked very nice," said Molly, ignoring the Carroll reserve. The Carrolls were rather proud of it, but it always irritated her immeasurably.

"Just a pot boiler."

"Let me see it."

"Now, Molly, you know I never like to show things until I've finished them. How pretty your new dress is! I always like you in that sort of thing."

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She looked at him a moment until his gaze fled from hers. Then she knew and understood that he, too, alas! had a vacant place in the hidden recesses of his deep, strong, and reserved nature. Their sorrow, though unspoken, was shared.

II

"But that's a *formal* garden!" sniffed one of the neighbors, to whom Fred secretly showed his plans, carefully drawn to scale.

"What of it?" asked Carroll. "Does it embarrass you?"

"What do you want with a formal garden? A mere affectation, utterly artificial."

Fred Carroll was a painter, but lay opinions seldom irritated him; they interested him. "The term 'formal' seems to frighten you. It still misleads so many good Americans. You think that a formal garden must be like a formal function—something pretentious and uncomfortable. It simply means," he added, "one that has form, not forms—forms of beasts and birds clipped

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out of yew trees, and similar atrocities. Your house has form—carefully studied proportions, an arrangement of lines and colors in such a way that the whole composes pleasingly, so why shouldn't the out-door portions of your home be treated with architectural consideration, too?" Perhaps Carroll also found interest in giving laymen the benefit of *his* views.

But this layman shook his head. "I believe in letting God's good out-doors alone. Nature is a good enough landscape architect for me."

"But not for me," answered the artist imperturbably; "nor for you either, only you don't know it."

"I should say I didn't!" and the layman sniffed more than ever. "I prefer nature's arrangement of flowers and woods and meadows to the gingerbread patterns arranged by man."

"Well, I like woods and meadows and things, myself," the artist rejoined, smiling. "I ought to, I make my living painting them. But I shouldn't care to have my

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house plunked down in the middle of an uncleared woods or a rank, ungraded meadow. Nor do you, I notice. If nature is a good enough landscape architect for you, why don't you let her run riot up to that imposing front door of yours instead of having your extensive lawn carefully cut every week at considerable expense?"

"Oh, that's different; every one does that."

"It's 'utterly artificial,'" quoted Carroll. "So is keeping those neat hedges of yours so carefully clipped—'a mere affectation.'"

"Well, it's the custom."

"So you're a slave to fashion, are you? Then you might as well prepare to build a formal garden; it is rapidly becoming a fashionable fad in this country." This was several years ago.

"Not for me. I won't have stiff, dinky flower-beds like a cemetery, fancy stone balustrades like a comic-opera stage—not on *my* place!"

"I don't blame you," said Fred, joining in the other's laugh, "if you judge formal

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gardens by cemeteries and stage settings; but the trouble is you *have* dinky little flower-beds already, scattered about all over your place, in little dabs here and there in a meaningless manner, neither like 'God's good out-doors' nor man's good art. Long as you are going to be 'unnatural,' as of course we are all bound to be from the moment we prefer houses designed by man to caves designed by nature, or family life to a beastly promiscuity, you might just as well arrange it all decently and rationally and beautifully instead of hideously. This requires individual thought as well as collective authority—not a mere stupid following of your neighbor's customs."

So the argument went futilely on, as similar arguments on the same subject have gone for centuries and will keep on going, no doubt for many centuries more. But the joke of it was that the one so jeeringly prejudiced against the foolishness of formal gardens acquired one on his place—oh, quite a pretentious one, full of gingerbread patterns—within a very few years, whereas

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the painter who was so keen on the subject had still nothing but plans on paper and ideas in his head.

And the further comedy of it was that the neighbor was not converted by Fred, as the latter believed, but merely had acceded to the importunities of his wife, who wanted "an Italian garden" for the good and sufficient reason that Everyone was getting them—the fad had arrived!

It sometimes seemed to the Carrolls all wrong that those who have the ability to conceive and make and fully appreciate the beautiful things of life so seldom have the money to acquire them. But that was a narrow, selfish view of the matter. For if Fred had "devoted his life" to cultivating the acquisitive talent, his æsthetic talents might not have prospered so well. And more of that sort of prosperity is sorely needed in this broad land of ours. Besides, it is good for the character, as Aunt Bella often remarked, to do without what you particularly want. She was the wealthy aunt who had a town house and a couple of

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country places. So the Carrolls, whose sorrow was no longer secret, ought to have been glad about it. It isn't every one that can beautify the world while being exploited by it. Not all of us are enabled to pay tribute to the privileged classes and yet enjoy "the blessed privilege of bringing up little souls in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," to quote again from excellent Aunt Bella, who had never married. Character-building is far more important than building mere gardens. All the Carrolls of the past had been keen on character-building, including that ancestor (only by marriage) who had done so much to build up the South African trade in Medford rum. Even Archie, of the present, talked a good deal about self-abnegation to his Sunday-school class. He was the one who had married the rich widow. The Freds did not talk so much about it. They hadn't time nor money to do good. So they had a fine lot of character brought to them free.

"I'm afraid we're getting more than our just share," said Molly, who abominated

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selfishness—though she also was only by marriage a Carroll. From which it may be seen that she, too, had a broad public spirit, though not a citizen at all, being merely a non-voting female woman.

Well, Fred, at least, had had a chance to dissipate his garden passion upon plans and sketches for his neighbor. Carroll was so glad to have been the means of making a convert, as he thought, and was so full of ideas and enthusiasm and spent so much time upon the project that the practical business man—he prided himself upon his shrewd knowledge of human nature—thought that the artist must be "trying to work him for the job," and wondered what he would charge. But when he found that there was "nothing in it" for Carroll, except the fun of the thing and the satisfaction of seeing wealth wake up to its æsthetic responsibilities, the practical man, who was not strong on æsthetics, jumped to the shrewd conclusion that Fred's ideas could not be very good because he held them so cheap. So he told Fred that it was not

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right to impose upon his time, old man, which was very true, and turned the job over to a landscape architect who charged a great deal, and therefore must have been good. The latter let Fred's neighbor in for an enormously costly garden. Therefore, it must have been good, too. It takes a shrewd, practical man to deal with art.

Well, Fred did not mind that. He had had his fun, making designs and sketches. He could not have worked them out in terms of cubic feet of earth and Italian day labor anyway. He did not know enough. He would have made a mess of it. He was a landscape painter, not a landscape architect. Only it made him furious that his pet ideas for spacious dignity were ignored in the final plan—for naturally the landscape architect did not care to work out another man's design, a mere amateur at that—and when the finished sketch in colors was completed Fred and Molly agreed that it was "very bad," just as the landscape architect and his client agreed that Fred's ideas were "very crude." But of course the Carrolls

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tactfully refrained from letting their neighbors suspect that their garden was "restless and self-consciously expensive and quite out of scale with the severe old house beside it"; and the owners of the gay garden considerately refrained from telling their young friends how much they had to learn about the formal treatment of great American estates.

When the garden was finished the owner led the Carrolls through its gladsome geometric intricacies on a tour of inspection. "What do you think of it?" he asked Fred.

Carroll gazed helplessly at the pie-crustean costliness, wondering what to say. Most people are as sensitive about their gardens as their children. A caller can't very well say "My! but that child is ugly." With a wink at Molly he turned to the owner and exclaimed soulfully, "How you must enjoy having it!"

"Not in the least!" the other replied, "but that damned landscape architect says it's the correct thing. It ought to be. It cost enough."

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At this point the landscape architect himself appeared. He glanced at Carroll nervously. "Well, what's the verdict?" he asked. For he respected those who knew. He only pretended to respect those who paid—unless they also knew, as has been known to happen.

"How you must have enjoyed doing it!" said Fred.

The landscape architect took the artist aside, as if to show him the pergola—which led nowhere, but his clients "knew what they liked." "Not in the least. But they wanted to make their money show and—well, I guess I've shown it all right!"

On the way home, Fred turned to his wife and declared vehemently, "Thank Heaven we couldn't have a garden when we first wanted it!"

"But ours would never have been like that," she answered.

"Don't you see? The design he has foisted upon those poor innocent people is merely an amplification of the foolish little doyly pattern he tried to tempt us with. It

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looked interesting on paper. Such plans always do, when you can't get the effect of fore-shortening—and we might not have known any better then!" And they gazed at each other, shuddering at their narrow escape.

"Well," said Molly, "there are advantages in poverty and procrastination after all." Then after a pause she added, "But all the same I wish we had a garden."

III

Frederic Carroll, deeply absorbed in the finishing of a canvas, was pondering over certain minute details which, possibly, would not make a vast difference to the progress of civilization one way or the other, and were undoubtedly delaying the start of a lot of other work which was to make money to pay for keeping a house, a wife, four children, and three dogs, not to speak of other luxuries with which it is said artists should not encumber the free expression of their own individualities.

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But he was not thinking about the flight of time or the progress of civilization or any of his other obligations. He never did while at work (only when he got through and had bills to pay), though he had placed his studio with one of its windows in full view of the drive so that the morning procession of butchers, grocers, plumbers and other constant callers would remind him of what he was there for.

This tendency was called temperament, and it was something to be proud of, though, "My dear, it's a dreadful thing to keep in the house," Molly confided to her dearest friend over the tea-cups. "It's worse than a skeleton in a family's closet until you get used to it."

Molly was getting used to it. She was seated in the studio now near by him to watch his genius burn. She was not working. It is not a woman's place to work. She was merely mending a few dozen garments of varying sizes and descriptions belonging to future citizens who at the present moment were seeing how hard a tennis ball

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could be thrown against their loving father's sky-light without smashing the glass. Fred did not mind; he had become used to it. So long as the ball did not come all the way through, he rather liked it—they might do so many worse things. He had also become used to having Molly around while he was working. She had taught him—it took years. She seldom bothered him and always admired his work. She had wonderful taste.

She even helped him, though he did not know that. He thought she was merely asking him eager, child-like questions, as when he was a young and precocious lecturer and she a young and precocious pupil at the League, where each had begun teaching the other several things unknown before. Judging from her questions she was quite intelligent for a woman. He told her so.

To-day, however, she asked a banal one, one she had asked before, and should have had intelligence and taste enough not to ask again. But it distressed her to see him working himself into pale exhaustion over

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something which was already beautiful enough and might be rendered less beautiful now that he was tired, yet would not give up. "Oh," she burst out, threading her needle, "why don't you just dash it off, and let it go at that." She made a striking gesture, thimble and all.

He came back, startled from his tantalizing vision of the thing he wanted to grasp and hold in paint, ever beckoning, bewitching, but always hovering just out of reach. He came back just in time to see the gesture. It interested him. He would have liked to dash off a study of that. Then he heard her words, realized the proportions and the curious arrangements of the world he lived in, felt guilty, ashamed, and then irritated. He knew all that as well as she did, but it was a wife's duty to understand and be sympathetic. He took his pipe out of his mouth. "Let's see you—just dash it off," he replied, imitating her gesture with his pipe, not having a thimble. Then he smiled indulgently and bent to his work again until the very last of his daylight was

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gone, which meant, as the month was June, after the Carroll's usual dinner hour, and this not only caused a cold, stiff dinner, but made the waitress give notice, for she had a lover waiting down the lane, and not even waitresses' lovers ought to be kept waiting, any more than artists ought to be married.

Molly had been a great artist herself, or was going to be, when Fred had come along and spoiled her life. So it was rather rubbing it in to jeer at her, even in fun. But then, she had spoiled his life, too, as she often reminded him. Each, it seems, had succeeded in making a complete negative of the other's life when they affirmed their intention of taking each other for better or worse. It was very sad.

When first married she had wanted to be "just an old-fashioned wife," because that seemed to be what Fred wanted. And now she had to be something of that sort, whether she wanted to or not. It seemed too bad. So many women could be producers of children, but so few women have had a fair chance to produce great works of

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art. For that reason most men think they can't. Therefore women say so too, many of them. For we give them everything, even their ideals of themselves, which is true chivalry. And we ask nothing in return, except their entire selves, which is true gallantry.

Well, a few days later, Molly ordered her husband out of the house and sent him off to the city to rest and have a good time with friends at the club. One of the things she had learned was to prevent his getting at a new piece of "creative work" when in the exhausted state immediately succeeding a finished product of creation. For he had at last finished it—at least, he wanted to fuss with it some more, only she smilingly but firmly refused, took it away from him, in fact, as she sometimes took a toy away from Frederic, Jr., when he became tired of its proper normal functions and tried to suck the paint off.

"But I've got a new slant on the thing, entirely," pleaded Frederic, Sr., the morning he was to start.

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"It's too late," said his smiling mentor. "I've expressed it to MacPherson's. It will make a hit." And sure enough it did, being one of the most charming and characteristic Carrolls now in existence. It is now worth thousands—though that does not help the Carrolls much, as they accepted mere hundreds for it. Others got the unearned increment which, however, Carroll earned for them by painting later and more powerful works of art. Still, some credit should be given the learned critics, especially as they fell to scrapping among themselves and thus advertised the collection. But it would not aid Fred's deserving heirs and assigns, if the multitude paid quarters to gaze in amiable ignorance at the notable work of the late Frederic Carroll—notwithstanding that this kind of "consumption" of his products would not in the least consume them. And there is an economic phenomenon difficult for brother Roger, the professor, to adjust in his scholarly book, "The New Economics." It is an oddly arranged world for men too, except those who go in for

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possessing it. It is arranged very well for them. They arranged it. Or rather we all arrange it nicely for them by graciously perpetuating well-meant institutions which have resulted in rewarding worthy commercial individualism with the ultimate control of all other forms of worthy individualism.

Having got rid of her husband, Molly, with a quiet glow in her determined eyes, sent her elder offspring in charge of the nurse across the sloping meadow to the woods for a picnic by the spring. Anything with guava jelly in it was a picnic. Then having conferred with the cook, given incisive orders to butcher's and grocer's boys, answered half a dozen telephone calls, consulted with the gardener about the irises (they had an excellent gardener, even though they had no real garden), written three or four letters for Fred—he often let her do such things, it made her feel that she was of some use—and helped make half a dozen beds, moving with light staccato footsteps about her immaculate and glistening

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house, she suddenly, stealthily darted into Fred's studio, picked up brushes and palette and began to "dash off" an oil of that portion of the Carroll estate bounded by the studio window—a graceful bit of trellis with large grape leaves in sun and shadow framing an old gate (erected the year before). She was still a child and did not like to take dares. Or, was she a woman with the spirit of the old-fashioned one trying to express itself in terms of the new?

But just as she was well started upon her dash, young Frederic, Jr., aged three, bleating loudly for her, tracked her down, found her out, regarded her reproachfully and reproved her for deserting him. Apparently this healthy male shared the common masculine prejudice against a woman's going out of her sphere. Woman was made for man. He did not in the least approve of her gazing with such rapt eyes out of the window of her happy home. Why should she when she could look at him? That ought to be enough for any true woman.

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But the training of women has made them very adaptable, some would say deceptive. Those worth keeping are always making romantically interesting excursions from their homes—in spirit; not less romantic because they keep their men in complacent ignorance of these clandestine sallies.

When Molly saw that what she was doing failed to coincide with his beautiful ideal of sweet femininity she put him in a chair (before the window) and began to paint *him*. He did not know that, but he saw that he had her undivided attention, and this pleased him very well. She told him how wonderful he was—and she looked as if she meant it. She admired his work (sucking his thumb). She asked him intelligent questions. She laughed gayly at his witticisms. He thought he was filling her life. He complacently believed that he had put an end to her nonsense. What they do with their soft little feminine hands does not matter so long as they gaze admiringly at us. It is just as well to let them play

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with fancy work, beads, baubles, what not; it gives them something to do, and keeps them out of mischief against the return of the superior sex.

Molly painted rapidly, not being hampered by a temperament. She was obliged to. He had gone to sleep looking contented and adorable. It was a chance she had often wanted. She was painting him so with the background of out-doors. The pose might not last long. He might wake up and want to go off to the city—that is, the sand pile. And yet she had the impudence to jeer while she took this unfair advantage. "How furious you would be," she smiled at the poor duped male, "if you only knew what a joke I have on you, you angel! You hoped to prevent me—you are *helping* me!" There was a gleam of triumph in her eye. This was an achievement. Any woman of intelligence may regard a mere fatuous father as so much putty in her hands, but it takes unusual gifts to get ahead of his child of three.

And yet these females assume a guile-

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less wonder that we seek to keep them in the home, where they should be securely locked. They even pretend, in order to dupe us, that the motive we allege is chivalric. It is not they that we wish to protect, but ourselves, and they know it, even when we do not. For the first law of nature makes itself felt and obeyed even among the blind.

By the time the children had wandered back from their picnic and Fred had returned from town, weary from too much smoking and weighted down with gossip and shop talk from the club (but refreshed, all the same, and glad to be back), Molly had finished her creative dash and had hidden it carefully away (in the lowest bureau drawer where she kept other things) and, dressed all in white—men loved them "all in white"—she was seated serenely before the white wicker tea-table upon the cool green terrace to welcome him, looking as sweet and guileless and fresh as the terrace itself or Freddie, Jr., who was also in white and who knew no more of what

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had happened or of what its consequences would be than Frederic, Sr.

"You poor dear boy, it must have been *dreadfully* hot in town," she said kissing him. "Boys, bring the reclining chair for your father. There, sit down—here's your tea—now tell me *a-all* about *everything*."

And he did, adding beamingly, "And how have things gone with you, dear?"

"Very smoothly. The children have been perfect angels all day. And Freddie has helped his mother wonderfully—haven't you, my adorable?"

The unsuspecting namesake had been hugging one of her fair hands; this he now kissed, being fond of her. It was the very hand that had betrayed him.

IV

For fear it might worry him, it had been Molly's intention to let her husband remain in ignorance of her faithlessness so long as possible. That is always the best way to do it. The fiction about women and se-

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crets is one of the traditions men fatuously enjoy handing down from generation to generation of males, while women listen patiently and enjoy men's believing it. But the female is the only sex which can keep important secrets, being trained to do so from infancy by almost every relation in life. It is only that so few secrets we consider important these females consider important enough.

But when one day, a month or two later, an express package of familiar shape was brought into the studio Fred, without noticing the "Mrs." prefixed to his own celebrated name, and supposing that it contained the original of one of his own works of art returned after reproduction for publication, opened the package and gazed first in perplexity, then in admiration at a certain dashing style in the "vigorous brush work," then in astonishment at recognizing a portrait of his own flesh and blood, and finally, in utter bewilderment, at seeing the modest signature of his small and beloved wife. Next, recovering his breath, he

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clamored loudly for his helpmeet. "Molly! Molly! come quick!" he called as if something had happened to one of the children —and something assuredly had. His namesake had been immortalized.

Trembling like Bluebeard's wife, Fred's soon stood in his presence. The evidence of her guilt was before her eyes, and now in her cheeks.

"When did you do it?" It was clear from his excited tone and the light in his eyes that her work had found favor in his sight.

"I am sorry," she said. "I did not mean you to know——"

"Sorry! Look at it. Why I didn't know you had it in you!"

"Oh, it's just a little thing I dashed off in an idle moment——"

But he did not feel this thrust. He was gazing and chuckling with delight again at the canvas. It was not an excellent portrait of Frederic, Jr. It was something better. It was a baby, The Baby, all babies; bland, bulging babyhood with its

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well-fed arrogance, its healthy individualism, its smug disdain of worry, its voluptuous content; as well as also, more commonly portrayed, often more sentimentally piled on, its soft fragrant cuddlesomeness, so terrifying to most men, so intoxicating to most women (not all!), causing them to beam and say, "Ah!" in that tone which betokens not only maternal tenderness but a sort of self-satisfied expertness of appreciation to which man can never hope to attain.

"I didn't know you had it in you," Fred repeated. There were crudities; it was not professional work; but it had charm, and it had the easy flowing confidence of virginal ignorance. Fred knew too much about his job to work so easily. "I wish I could have done that," he said sincerely.

"Oh, don't be sarcastic," she answered, glowing at his praise, trying in vain to conceal her joy of it. "So you're really not offended at my trying?"

"Offended?" He looked perplexed. He had forgotten his prejudices for the mo-

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ment. "Why, that's good work, I tell you." Art, it seems, is sexless.

Molly was surprised, a little taken aback. Somehow the big, blundering brutes do at times show a generous fairness which rather shames and confuses the petty sex. We have taught them much, but not sportsmanship. But Fred had gone on, talking of the merits of the work and some of its demerits, to show sincerity, in the masterly manner men talk shop to women, making queer movements with his thumb and head as many painters seem to feel relief in doing. "And the background—the trellis frame, the big leaves—the kid's head against the green gate. You have the decorative instinct, Molly, rare in women. This sketch might make a successful special cover for a magazine—reproduce well, too. But, of course, they didn't see that. Too bad they returned it. I am awfully sorry. I remember how it used to be myself." He covered it up with its wrappings, to go on with his day's work, for man is the wage-earner. He could be genuinely sorry for his wife, and

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at the same time feel a slight pang of relief for himself. He did not mind other women being strenuous and "artistic"—but not his Molly. She was his wife.

Now was her supreme moment. "They *had* to return it," she said, casually, "because I sold only the rights of reproduction, dear, just as you do."

"What! They took it?" He forgot about his day's work.

"*They* did not take *it*. It took one of those prizes they offered for covers, for the Baby's number." She said it as if accustomed to doing such things.

"The prize! It took a prize?"

"Only the second prize," she added modestly.

"Why, that's the very contest I told you of—they asked me to act as one of the judges in that contest."

"Yes, dear."

"Is that why you advised me *not* to act?"

"Yes, dear."

Fred burst out laughing. It was one of those moments when a husband realizes

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that he does not know his wife so thoroughly as he had supposed, and likes her more for it. It does them both good, as a rule.

"Oh, it wasn't much," she added, "not half as much as you get for *your* things you know."

"Molly," he declared after a smiling pause, half-jocular, half-earnest, "I always said I spoiled a good painter when I married you. Now I'm sure of it. But, you *would* marry me."

Her smiling answer took him unawares. "I can live it down, my dear," she said innocently, pushing back her hair. "It is not too late yet. They have asked to 'see more of my work.'"

The artist looked up at his wife, artist no longer, all husband now. Art may be sexless, but marriage is not. "Do you mean, you are thinking of drawing for the magazines—regularly?—that sort of thing?"

"Why not? if I can make money at it."

The so-called civilized instincts, dormant for the moment in the unworldly artist en-

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thusiasm, were now awakened. Somehow he could not like it. He showed it in his scowl. It was not a desire to absorb all her time and attention, any more than it could be jealousy. He wanted her to have more time and fewer cares. He believed in women's doing things—but not for money.

He thought this due entirely to the instinct for protecting his mate. Perhaps it was, though when carried to its logical conclusion it kills them as mates. He thought that the instinct for displaying his masculine power to protect her before the gaze of other males had nothing to do with it. Perhaps it hadn't, consciously, but it may be that even artists, who see themselves upon enlightened heights far above the burrowings and jostlings of the sordid horde, professing to despise the absurd ideals of our pecuniary culture, sometimes show that they, too, are tempered by the pecuniary canons of respectability derived therefrom.

It is quite all right to allow the clinging creatures to do a little real work now and then, some of them do rather good

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work, winning, even commanding the respect of the superior sex. But they should not be paid for it. The only thing they should be paid for is living with a man. Men will give them as much as they can afford, or at any rate as much as they, in their superior judgment, see fit. That is the only respectable economic sphere for the female. Others are sometimes necessary, to be sure, but they are compromises with man's lofty ideal of womanhood. Men so decreed it when physical force ruled the world, and are doing their best to perpetuate it while financial force rules the world. And women have heretofore accepted this ideal—for what else could they do, poor things!—barring a few queer, unsexed creatures whom (or which) we pity or laugh at.

"See here, Molly," he said, smiling, but sympathetically trying to think in feminine terms, "are you—'unhappy'?"

She looked at his easel. "But are *you?*"

"Oh, but that's different; I'm a man. I have my work to do in the world."

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"'Artist' can be either masculine or feminine—or neither."

To be sure, it was not so bad as if it were law or medicine she wanted to practise. He looked interested, amused, alert, and finally laughed indulgently. They will get these crazy notions now and then, when you forget to kiss them or something. "So the kids and I aren't enough, eh?"

"Enough! I really don't feel the need of any more husbands or children."

He laughed, as she had intended that he should; but she knew that he was serious from the slangy manner in which he asked: "Oh, come, wouldn't you really rather take care of kids than paint 'em?"

Molly took a dance step toward him, raised her impudent face to his and shook a small capable finger under his nose, "Oh, but I can do *both*, you see," and she swaggered across the room from him. It was the New Woman Rampant—most adorably so.

Fred chuckled, and catching her by her waist, still attractively slender, kissed her

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mouth, still eminently kissable. For this still seemed to him the best way to end an argument with a woman. He avoided, so far as possible, arguments with other men's wives.

Molly, though a new woman, liked to be caught and kissed by the man she loved. It is said that the soft yielding creatures seldom get over it. Perhaps it is not inconsistent with the new womanhood. For it is undeniable that men, at least, while still given to catching and kissing in robust man fashion, have been known to succeed in other ways at the same time.

But that did not end the argument. Frederic, Jr., ended it by a summons from the throne room. Molly ran with cheerful loyalty. But even that did not settle the question of the proper limitations of her sphere. It settled itself, as such things usually do. . . .

Molly's triumph was to be kept a secret in the family until the day when it should burst upon the world in the shape of the magazine itself, a worthy journal devoted

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to the interests of women, *true* women. Molly did not tell a soul.

But Fred did. He told everybody, manlike. He boasted of it to all their friends—under the transparent guise of merely telling the joke upon himself, "Why don't you just dash it off—" and "Let's see you do it"—especially to those who still considered Molly merely a cunning little thing, because she took her clothes more seriously than her clubs. He seemed, indeed, more proud of his wife's achievements than of his first picture in the Salon in his bachelor days.

It was the money that appealed most to Molly, the sordid little parasite. She was an economic entity at last. It made her self-respecting. It gave her a superior, elated sensation. It is not every woman who can be an economic entity. "It's the first money I ever earned in my life," she said, beginning on the heels of the tenth pair of stockings.

"I see," said Fred, who didn't. He was painting swingingly this morning. There-

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fore he was happy. "Quite a capitalist, aren't you? What are you going to do with it all?"

"I suppose I really ought to turn half of it over to my husband," she said demurely.

"He might spend it foolishly," said Fred. "Husbands are so inexperienced in money matters."

"I think I shall invest it," she said seriously. She seemed impressed with her new responsibility.

"Where—or is that something a husband oughtn't to bother his little head about?"

"In the savings bank for little Fred. You see, I can have all the glory—except what you get as the husband of Mrs. Carroll. So it is only fair that he should have the money. He earned it. Besides, he hasn't a cent in the world, poor darling." It was too true. The earlier children, whether namesakes or not, had fared pretty well among grandparents and bachelor uncles on both sides of the house, but toward the end of the string the recurrence of new little dears became an old story and

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rather a drain. Besides, there was now considerable competition among the various in-laws, and even grandparents can become *blasé*.

"Poor little chap," said Fred, "but you will do nothing of the sort. He's my namesake. I will put the proceeds of one of these money-makers to his credit. You must get something pretty for yourself with your wealth. Nothing useful, something extravagant. You haven't blown yourself since we built the house."

Molly's darning needle worked in silence for a moment. "I do need a new evening dress," she began tentatively, then seeing a faint frown on her husband's brow—"Do you think me horribly selfish?"

"Yes, I've often noticed that," he said with his nicest look. "We'll go to town next week. I'll help you pick out some decent clothes."

They were indeed decent, and almost as costly as those of the early days when Fred had only Molly and himself to clothe. "But it's your own money," urged Fred,

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when the frugal habit of later years knitted her brows. "You earned it. You deserve it."

When the wonderful things at last came home, the bill with them was receipted. Fred ducked behind his newspaper.

"Do you think this a fair, a manly thing to do?" she asked. "Was it thoughtful? Was it Christian? Was it kind?" All this with orthodox interludes according to ancient conjugal custom.

"You needed some new things," he said gruffly, "you never would have got decent ones otherwise." Then he turned to the newspaper again.

"It seems to me I have *some* rights," Molly complained. "It's my own money. I earned it. I used to think that if I could only earn some for myself I should not feel so degraded, but—what *will* you let me spend it on?" She looked desperate and determined.

Fred liked the look. He put down the newspaper, arose, approached and took her by the shoulders. "What do you want most in all the world?"

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She looked up into his eyes, then sprang off the floor into his arms. "Our garden at last!"

"No, *yours*. I've got a tennis court."

V

Nevertheless, Molly, though a new woman, felt a little badly about it's not being *our* garden, until Fred made that all right by showing her the plans—he had scores of them. "I design it, and you merely pay for it. I have already put in more time upon the job than your money can possibly cover, and I'll probably put in a lot more."

(He did, as it turned out. In fact, not only Molly's picture of his namesake, but his picture of her garden—the one she had caught him at—went into their out-door room. Even then it did not achieve the mellow charm of Fred's painting. It could not expect to do that for a hundred years. But it was a garden, and their own, and they loved it.)

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"You see that is the new way," he had gone on; "the new woman supplies the money, tosses over a check with an abstracted scowl—'try to make that last the month out,' she says, and goes on with her more important affairs. The mere husband supplies the time, taste, and attention to petty details. Man's sphere is the garden. It is all right. We are merely a little in advance of our generation. That's all."

Molly looked up at him soberly. She had derived an idea from his fooling. "It doesn't really matter so much, which does which, Fred, does it, so long as they do them *together*."

It seemed to be a good enough idea for the present.

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X

THE CARROLLS' FORTUNE

SCENES: First act, the House of Sterling and the House of Carroll. Second act: The House of Mammon, and the wicked but inspiring world.

(A LOGICAL CONCLUSION TO ALL THAT HAS PRECEDED. BY THE SIMPLE AID OF THE "MISTAKEN IDENTITY" TRICK (DEAR TO DRAMATISTS) VIRTUE IS EASILY SHOWN TO TRIUMPH INEVITABLY, AND, APPLAUDING AS THE CURTAIN IS RUNG DOWN, WE TURN AWAY TO OUR OWN SWEET HOMES.)

I

Just when the affairs of "the Freds" were approaching a crisis, a sordid financial crisis, the enormously wealthy Mr. Sterling recurred in their orbit, like a comet, to brighten their horizon.

Mr. Sterling had helped to avert financial panics in Wall Street, but to the Carrolls he was better known as that horribly rich person who had once rented their house during horse-show week at the near-by country club, and liked it so well that he afterward sent

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his secretary out to buy it one afternoon when not too busy with other things. It has already been related in these annals how the Freds had cruelly refused to sell at any price because they liked it so well themselves and because Mr. Sterling was hardly worthy of such a charming place as theirs. They were painters, and he was a mere millionaire.

Now, some men might have been dismayed by this rebuff. Not so Mr. Sterling. He consoled himself by secretly securing options upon the greater part of the adjoining township. Then he let it leak out that he proposed to establish a country-seat worthy of him upon the most commanding site of all this land, thus making a market for what he did not want at prices which reimbursed him for the entire operation. So he was now engaged upon the amiable pastime of crowning an unsuspecting American hill with an Italian villa whose south façade was almost as extensive as the home hole at the golf links, thus giving honest employment to many workmen.

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"As exuberant and spectacular as the Villa Caprarola," said Molly Carroll contemptuously.

"More so," said Fred, sniffing at the many wide-spreading terraces, the flamboyant redundancy. "That man Peters must be having the time of his life. He's going to beat Vignola at his own game!"

Wilson Peters had risen in the world since he had been the Carrolls' architect. He was now the Sterlings' architect.

It is possible that Mr. Sterling had never heard of Caprarola or its designer. At any rate, the Carrolls derived a certain satisfaction from thinking so. But Mr. Sterling would not have cared a hang about that. Why talk about such things when you have the money to buy them. Money talks. The Sterling place when finished could be seen from miles around to be more expensive than any of the estates in that part of the country, and it was also clear that he would have spent even more upon it if any one had told him how. True architecture should

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always be an expression of the individuality of the builder.

Well, having erected one of the show-places in America, he now desired to decorate its interior in such a way that those Americans and visiting foreigners who were privileged to penetrate the barocco entrance would admire the owner's noble art of sparing no expense from the inside point of view. And that is how the painter and the billionaire met again upon a business basis.

For Mr. Sterling had decided to have "a symposium of leading American artists" represented upon his walls, instead of importing foreign labor for the purpose, as others of our aristocracy often do, on the same principle that they buy foreign titles for their daughters, nothing being too good for them. This Captain of Industry was a patriot, and America was good enough for him, he said. He believed in encouraging home industries. That was how he began stepping heavenward toward the dizzy heights of high finance.

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Now, Frederic Carroll was not so well known as some of the others on Mr. Sterling's type-written list, but experts in such matters had said that he was worthy to be there. Besides, Sterling had been impressed by the young man's independence and therefore by his pictures; had bought some of them once, he believed; and wanted to help the poor artist along. He was a kind man, and wealth is a sacred trust, and we are here to help one another. After all, we have but one life to lead.

Mrs. Sterling, it may be added, observed that the Carrolls, notwithstanding their lack of outward and visible signs of inward and financial grace, seemed to have an effectual calling list. They were popular among a God-fearing colony of conservative wealth, where Mrs. Sterling proposed to be popular too. Every little thing helps.

The Carrolls, too unworldly to see any such motive, were delighted. They thought it spoke well not only for their position in the world of art, but especially for the Sterlings' taste. It was encouraging to

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see their fellow-countrymen making progress. The Carrolls, too, were patriots. Besides, they needed the money. The children were growing up, and seemed to take it for granted that they would get an education and the other "advantages" and disadvantages their parents had received.

All the preliminary overtures were delightful. The Sterlings beamed upon the Carrolls and invited them to dine in the vast, new-smelling house in order to talk the project over. The Carrolls beamed upon the Sterlings and graciously overlooked the fact that the new-comers had not yet been invited to dine at "The Meadows," as the Carroll house was called on their letter-paper but never elsewhere.

They admired the house as much as they could, Fred whispering to Molly as she rejoined him after taking off her wraps, "Why, there's nothing very bad here."

Each side politely put the other at ease all through the long, elaborate dinner. "We cannot all have the sacred trust of wealth," was the benign attitude of the

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hosts, "but let us be kind to those not so blessed."

"We cannot all have birth, breeding, and a sense of the beautiful," was the tactful attitude of their guests; "let us keep them from suspecting it."

"Now," said Mr. Sterling expansively to the painter, who was lighting one of his host's cigars with the pious carefulness of a connoisseur who seldom had a chance at such delicious ones, "I'll show you the little room you are to make famous." He led the way. "Here it is—our library."

Fred raised his fastidious nose. He blew smoke in thoughtful silence. He looked about the "little room," which was even more expansive than its master, with the critical, authoritative air of the expert, oblivious of the owner, his millions, his power —a master craftsman busy with his craft. Mr. Sterling suddenly felt dwarfed and neglected. He did not like it but it amused him. He had often felt this same curious atmosphere of dominance when physicians and lawyers were summoned to his presence.

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Being of the dominating sort himself he was always inclined to resent it though he could not have told just why, for after all had he not the money to command their expert services? He had.

"It's a good room," said the painter with eloquent simplicity. "Peters did a good job here." And he strode down the centre of the room to get another point of view.

"Of *course* it's a good room," said the owner tagging on behind the expert. "Now, what I want done—" But Carroll did not hear, for in his arrogant stride (as if he owned the whole place) he had stopped abruptly. There upon the wall hung a celebrated picture he had heard of all his life, but had never seen before—an old master which had recently found a new one. The artist forgot about the library, forgot the ladies who had joined him in it, even forgot what he was there for, as he gazed in reverent silence at the canvas, and from that time forth owned it as Mr. Sterling never would or could own it. However, as he did not take it down from the wall this did not

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disturb the lawful possessor. On the contrary, the latter was pleased with the painter's tribute to his prowess. He looked at the picture himself, then at the artist, and at the picture again. It belonged to him. He had bought it.

"Lord! we are lucky to have that here in the colony," said Fred turning to his wife. And he heaved a sigh of great satisfaction.

"Well, I think we ought all to do our little part to encourage art," said the acquisitive genius modestly. "And I mean to have only the best here. Now let's get down to business."

Mr. Sterling, it seems, wanted a big allegorical presentation of The Search for Truth running clear around the library over the books—fine new books—all of them latest editions.

Fred smiled tactfully and suggested something else. "I used to go in for allegorical stunts when I was young," he said, "but I've lived it down since."

The free use of colloquialisms, not to say slang, on the part of the Nicest people was

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always perplexing to the Sterling daughters, who had been working nights to acquire culturine—for they had inherited the acquisitive temperament. Such flippancy always made them blink, and in this case it seemed so incongruous with Mr. Carroll's lingering taint of a Boston accent. That was not the way high-life parts talked on the stage or in Irving Lawton's stories. It is so disillusionizing when life is not true to fiction. They grew sceptical of Mr. Carroll's being "a real artist," after all. He had been not a bit absent-minded during the dinner, remembering to help himself bountifully as each worthy course was presented. He wore a conventional evening tie and instead of a Vandyke beard he had a charming wife.

But Mr. Sterling had warmed to the painter, for the old man detested the lah-de-dah manner of certain high-brows. So he too smiled tactfully, but still seemed keen for Truth.

Fred stopped smiling and explained kindly but emphatically that if he did anything at

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all it would have to be "a representation of life—not a misrepresentation."

Mr. Sterling stopped smiling and suggested kindly but emphatically that it was his library.

"But it's my work," said the painter, smiling again.

This gave Mr. Sterling pause. Then he said "Twenty thousand dollars"—the ladies having disappeared—and now he too smiled again.

This gave Fred pause. Then he scowled and threw up his hands. "Look here," he said, "you'd better get young De Courcey on the job. He's a good fellow, and is given to doing searches for truth."

But Mr. Sterling also scowled, saying: "You'd better sleep over it," and the next day sent Wilson Peters, the architect, to finish the negotiations.

"But you know I don't believe in the mere voluptuous joy of line and color and design," said Fred to Peters. "When I paint I've got to say something—not merely smile and look pleasant."

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Peters remarked that so-and-so, naming a much higher priced American decorator, was certainly saying something, and saying it beautifully, on the ceiling of Mr. Sterling's ballroom. And Peters was right, even though Fred did sniff at his colleague's gladsome pink females in appropriate décollete evening clouds.

"It's charmingly done of course," Fred admitted, "that chap couldn't help doing it charmingly—only, to me it's all as silly as an ice-cream soda-water."

"But the women like it almost as well," said Peters humorously, "and there'll be a bunch of minor millionaires after you fellows now. If Sterling takes you on that proves to them that you're the real thing. He has become a patron of the arts."

"Yes," said Fred. "He knows the names, dates, and prices of all the old masters."

"And can pay them too," rejoined the architect—"new masters as well. This seemed to me a grand opening for your future"—for the architect had suggested Fred to his client—"and twenty thousand

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dollars is not bad to open with. He told me positively he would not pay you a cent more."

"It looks big as a house to me," said Fred; "it ought to get a man's best work."

"Oh, you could pull it off. The old man would never know the difference."

"But I should. So would you and all the fellows that count."

"Oh, we'd never tell," said the rival of Vignola. "The old man has taken a shine to you."

"But so have I to him. He's a real person. He deserves the best there is in the market for the price. I could never give it my best. It isn't my sort of thing. You had no business recommending me in the first place. In fact, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Thanks, old man, thanks. I had an idea I was doing you a friendly turn." Peters dropped his eyes. "We were friends once, you know." Pete wanted to "patch it all up."

"Oh rot!" said Fred, shrugging his

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shoulders, "you know I'm grateful to you, and all that—but the simple fact is, though I didn't care to admit it to Sterling, De Courcey can do that sort of thing better. You know that as well as I do."

The architect looked at his old friend a moment in quizzical silence. "A magnificent gesture," he said, and took his departure, looking hurt.

Well, in the end young De Courcey got the commission, and Sterling got his Search for Truth, running rampant all around the library—a very able piece of work all the same—and the pig-headed painter got nothing but a disappointment.

There was no magnificent gesture about it. A year previously Wilson Peters' physician had sent him to a well-known surgeon to have his appendix removed. The physician had often performed that now simple operation in his younger days at the hospital. He could have done it again. There was no magnificent gesture about that. Every year some of Peters' own competitors turned down thousands of dollars worth of work

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because it wasn't the kind of work they believed in doing. No gesture at all.

The colony however, when the story leaked out, was delighted, for it was a conservative crowd, and resented the melodramatic entrance of the new billionaire, especially certain too-conservative business men who had long cast thoughtful glances upon that fine tract of land. For the tribal instinct is strong, and when a young David arises to smite the encroaching Philistine, we all shout "Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Lord!" no matter what may have been our previous opinion of slings or of harmless young shepherds that use them.

But this did not help the Carrolls financially, and the recurrence of Mr. Sterling in their orbit did not solve their difficulties in the least. It only explained them.

II

If no man can serve two masters it goes without saying that two mistresses are still more out of the question, especially when

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one of them is so jealous as art is acknowledged to be by new students at the League every year, and the other so exacting as domesticity proclaims itself even more eloquently on the first of every month. It was fine to be appreciated by "the chosen few," but that didn't pay the plumber or any other piper. It is commendable to cling to high ideals but this did not lower the high cost of living. It is noble to be true to a heaven-sent gift, but Carroll had heaven-sent children, and numerous other expenses entailed by a marriage also made in heaven but exported to America.

Obviously in such a dilemma a man should follow the Biblical injunction—"cleave to one and forsake the other." Frederic Carroll was undoubtedly a better painter than provider, so, on the principle of the greatest good to the greatest number, it would seem altruistic—nor would precedent be lacking—to forsake his wife and family and give himself over entirely to the Other.

But it is to be feared that Carroll, though

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now a matured and thoughtful citizen, interested in civic righteousness, lacked this broad racial view of the matter. For he was still trying to be true to both heavenly trusts, and thus was faithful to neither. He loved his work, but unfortunately he loved his family, too. So he led a tortured existence, which served him right for keeping up this iniquitous dual life, but it was hard upon all three sides of the triangle—his family, his work, and himself.

Every year now Fred and Molly gave up a few more of the "things they were accustomed to," a few more luxuries they had once considered necessities. Fred wore old clothes to buy his children new ones. Molly made her own. That was not hard poverty; merely hard luck. They were working to live, instead of living to work, as they had intended—the common lot. It was not the high cost of living, but the cost of high living that was troubling the American people, as was ably remarked by a railroad president when interviewed in his private car. But these orthodox sacrifices in

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the interest of the children had begun to tell upon the parents, and as the children were dependent upon the parents, it might soon affect even the children, for whom it was all supposed to be done. It was a goodly sight to behold Fred and Molly gaining character by sacrifice, but the children preferred beefsteak, being gross materialists. At the present rate even they might have a chance, early in life, to see how they liked Self-abnegation, Self-sacrifice, and all the other selfish things the older generation of Carrolls were so fond of writing to Fred about. Surely even stern Aunt Bella would hardly approve of this newest generation's lending a hand at that. Its hands were too small.

But the pleasing picture of his little daughter playing in the sunshine outside the studio door did not seem to inspire Frederic Carroll in the proper way, and the rattle of butcher's carts coming up the drive, with something else to be paid for, failed to increase his capacity for work. It only decreased his capacity for play.

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The boys did not matter so much, but when this young female looked up at him with her mother's eyes and a smile of feminine trust that her future was in safe hands, those skilled hands sometimes shook so that her future began to tremble. The orthodox spur of necessity doesn't always work in the orthodox way. Why should it? It does not seem inevitable that a spirited racehorse should show his best gait hitched to a furniture van, however precious the household goods therein may be. . . .

Molly was playing her proper part in her proper sphere. She had even tried, it may be remembered, to break out of her proper sphere. Other helpmeets of her acquaintance were making helpful incomes as painters or illustrators. Some of these were women whom Molly had excelled when they were all girls together in Paris. But while they had been learning their trade this wife had given that one up for another, the ancient and honorable trade of marriage. A few of them had managed to keep both going at once with success. "I'm afraid I

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dropped out too long," said Molly. "I must have won that prize on a fluke. I'm 'just a sweet old-fashioned wife,'" she added, caricaturing the well-known tone of self-satisfaction. "That's what we always say, Fred, when we can't or won't be anything else."

But her clever mimicry sometimes failed to amuse him as formerly. He stared at her with impolite abstraction—an old-fashioned woman at that, and he a Carroll!

"I've got an idea!" she exclaimed with sudden enthusiasm. "I can't help being a sweet, old-fashioned wife, but I can easily stop being 'a real lady.'" So she reduced her domestic staff to its lowest terms, and stopped "helping her husband in his work," because she had so much of her own to do. The children were not "bringing them together" but pulling them apart—just when they enjoyed being together most and were profiting by it. . . .

Well, it was bound to come out all right in the end. Aunt Bella said so, and Aunt Bella ought to know. Those lots she had

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tried to sell many years ago in the East Side had increased enormously in value. Virtue is always rewarded, and genius always triumphs over adversity. Aunt Bella said that too. Genius that does not triumph over adversity is never heard of; therefore whoever heard of genius not triumphing over adversity?

"I don't want character, I want cash," said Fred opening another letter from dear Aunt Bella. But this one contained not only sound advice, but a substantial check. Fred handed the check over to Molly and read the long letter with a disagreeable smile.

"Give me back that check," he demanded, and writing a brief, but let us hope considerate, note of thanks to his beloved aunt, he returned her proffered gift.

"Well, I admire your pride, at any rate," said Molly.

"Yes, it will help the children through the hot spell," replied her husband.

"Then why are you returning the check?" asked Molly.

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"Read her letter. It seems, she approves of our clinging to 'our ideals,' and throwing down old man Sterling's tainted money, but she stipulates almost in so many words that we are to go to church and take an 'active part' in 'good works.'"

"The horrid old thing!" exclaimed Molly, who had never appreciated Aunt Bella.

"Now, I shouldn't mind going to church and having a good loaf on Sunday if I could afford the daylight, but I must be too religious! I'd go for a rest, but not for a bribe."

Molly laughed. Then she became serious. "But what are we going to do? We can't keep this up much longer."

"Why, it's perfectly simple," said Fred, not liking her worried expression. "I'll go back into illustrating again. Irving Lawton is rounding up a new book, called 'High Tide,' or 'High Life,' or something of that sort. I think I can get the job of doing the pretty girls for it. Molly, there's nothing like having a trade to fall back upon."

"It seems a pity," sighed Molly as he

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started for town, "that you should have to go back to that sort of thing—at your time of life."

"I ought never to have gone out of it," mused Fred on the train.

Now, it would be a shame to leave the impression that the hero of these annals—an American hero at that—had failed to make money, even as a painter. It would be so disillusionizing. Let us make him a noble hero at once by showing clearly that he made a great deal; not so much as some other painters who did more popular work, or (must it be admitted?) better work, or even both! All the same, this honest day-laborer, without taking toll of the labor of others, actually earned more than some of us who are blessed by the Lord with great possessions, giving tithes to the poor and thanking God that we are not as that man.

For, however unbusinesslike Fred may have been during the process of conceiving and producing his wares for the market, alone in his silent studio, removed from the hum of competition and progress, he needed

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no guardian when it came to disposing of his finished output. He had inherited his share of Yankee shrewdness along with the less profitable New England conscience. There were enough of the chosen few to pay him the high prices he exacted for his works of genius, grinding the faces of the rich, according to the laws of supply and demand. He could not exploit the poor, even if he wanted to. He could only uplift the affluent. He could not employ underlings in his one-man plant. He had to operate his factory all alone, or not at all. Nor could he run day and night shifts, because he needed daylight to work in and nights for sleep.

As a painter he could not take advantage of "the capitalistic system." He had done so as an illustrator. Once upon a time, seeing Irving Lawton glide by in a limousine acquired by royalties from his interesting volumes about the 'Rich,' Fred having just acquired a baby-carriage and feeling poor, went to Horace Beck, already known as "that live young publisher," and sug-

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gested that a picture-book called "The Carroll Girl" might go. It went, and was followed by a calendar or two, thus exploiting schools for refined young ladies and colleges for raucous young men. Rare copies may still be found here and there, displaying such archaic sleeves, such obsolete hair arrangement that most of these frayed quartos have been relegated to nurseries presided over by those former schoolgirls and provided for by those former college youths. Fred's royalties had helped found his own happy home and Molly's sunny nurseries. Therefore, had he any right to question the justice of the capitalistic system? He never dreamed of doing so. He wasn't interested in muck-raking.

But while he could not take advantage of the capitalistic system as a painter, it kept right on taking advantage of him as a provider. In short, this able-bodied man, like all other day-laborers (the only true individualists) was helping to support the families of those blessed by the Lord—with the aid of the Supreme Court of the

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United States, which can do no wrong. Now, this seems a good deal to ask of an impractical painter who had a good-sized family of his own to support, even though he did believe in "letting good enough alone."

Moreover, it hardly seems "practical." Mr. Sterling, for instance, was able to support himself. He actually did so. Unlike certain members of a conservative colony, whose wives had been looking forward with secret pleasure to snubbing Mrs. Sterling—though they were called off from this amiable intention and made to receive the newcomers cordially, because their providers had shrewdly invested in the "Sterling Interests"—unlike some of these representatives of old substantial wealth, this new-rich man actually earned a good deal of what he got; maybe twenty per cent., let us say fifteen per cent., at any rate; which would have netted him a million or so a year, and that is not a bad income even for commercial geniuses to earn. He deserved more by his country than did Fred

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and was getting it. For Mr. Sterling's business ability was not "a mere low order of cunning" as it has been called by some visionary professor who must be envious; Mr. Sterling's was a high order of intelligence, combined with courage, imagination, and bewildering resourcefulness. He, too, was creative. He was an empire builder, a dreamer, like all great men. That must have been why he and Fred instinctively took to each other. They say great men always recognize and respect each other's greatness.

But, unlike Fred, he was making his dreams come true; for his were the talents cherished and protected, like wives, by our economic and social arrangements, which husband them. Whereas Fred had to work out his dreams alone, despite handicaps and hinderances. It is, of course, a free country and a man need not eat if he doesn't want to, but Fred and family wanted to, and bought at least eighteen meals a day whether work went well every day or not.

It is a free country, so Sterling *et al.* were

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not obliged to buy Fred's products unless they wanted to. Art is a mere luxury, like diamond studs. Well, even so, Fred had made them want to. For he too was an able and industrious man and worked fully as hard as the Mr. Sterlings—though they would never believe it. In short, they paid his prices, he paid theirs, and he might have kept on doing so, saying "the measure of success is not the amount of money one makes," but for an insuperable difficulty, foreshadowed by all that has been related previously in these veracious annals: Fred had exhausted his capital; just when the demand for his products had become greater than the supply; just when he was dreaming dreams for wonderful work in his matured efficiency, work calculated to set the world on fire, as could be proved by Molly, who understood these dreams and approved of them.

This exhaustion of capital has little reference to mere money. He did not need much money to operate his plant successfully; merely enough to meet current per-

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sonal expenses. A lot of money would have been a nuisance to him, like having more food than he could conveniently eat. You can't do good work if you have to stop and eat all the time and to store supplies away in the refrigerator.

There are three prerequisites for the successful conduct of a harmless industry like his—machinery, steam, and raw material. He was still young enough to have plenty of steam. He had perfected an efficient machine of the well-known Carroll model. But he had very little left by this time to dump into the hopper.

Those who do not understand the apparently simple piece-work of a sweat-shop like Fred's, seem to think that all a painter has to do is to sit under a white umbrella before a "view" and copy it, smoking a pipe picturesquely and chatting humorously with the natives who look over his shoulder and say: "Well, I know what I like, anyway." But as a matter of every-day practical, temperamental fact, even the painting of corn-shocks bears evidence of the mountains the

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painter has, or has not, sketched, and climbed, and "communed" with; of the walks and talks on and about them with others of his craft who speak his own peculiar language. What a man does in his studio is but a rendering of what he gets outside.

Every year Fred had been getting less outside. Every year he had more to pay but less to say. He had used up his ideas; he could not stop to get new ones. Sojourns abroad to study the foreign schools had been abandoned long ago to pay for the children's schools at home; sketching trips to wild and rocky headlands had gone into summer trips to tame and safe seashores. Meanwhile his critical faculties had continued to develop, unfortunately, until now they were far ahead of his capacity for creation. He had to build his creations up from meagre remembered suggestions, somewhat as a paleontologist constructs prehistoric mammals from the fossil imprints of a left hind foot. Most of Fred's canvases he now hid away in portfolios, hoping some day to have the leisure and

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exuberance to breathe the glow of life into them. He might have sold them on his reputation, but he knew they were not good, and did not try to sell them. He was at one of those appalling periods in the career of many a painter, when he feels that the end has come. Everything since and including his marriage apparently led to this result. Mild extravagance and mistakes of judgment hastened the day but did not cause it.

III

Horace Beck, the live young publisher, said: "Sure—delighted! We didn't suppose you'd deign to touch it."

"Well, I come high," said Fred.

"I think there'll be no difficulty in meeting your price," said the publisher. "Fred, you know I've always said that you were a chump not to sail in and take it away from these cheap skates who are making thousands with their pert-faced, empty-nozzled matinee girls. Now there's some class about your work."

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"Thanks," said Fred.

"You and Irving used to make a winning combination. This new school of artists don't know the real thing when they see it; and most of them never see it—except at long range."

"Thanks," said Fred; "I'll try to live up to Irving."

"Oh, that's all right as high-brow's sarcasm, but Irving delivers the goods. He makes more out of me than I make out of him—and I got over *my* high-brow notions before I'd been out of college three years. Ideals are all right but they don't pay bills."

"You're right," said Fred. . . .

The Carrolls were now so hard up that Molly acted as Fred's model for the illustrations—"Though my gowns aren't just right," she said smiling.

"But we can fake the latest fashions from these Parisian magazines," said Fred.

She had to neglect her children to do this, but then the actual old-fashioned mother did not dream of taking such fastidious care of her children as the much-maligned

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modern mother does. So it must have been all right.

"I'm going to make a good thing of this," said Fred working hard. "I'm going to show those cocky kids how to draw real women, with bones inside of their bodies and souls inside of their eyes."

"It's the artist in him," thought Molly, though she sighed to think of the amount of time he was spending on these pot-boilers. And yet it wasn't the artist in Molly that made her want to put an untidy room to rights whenever she saw one, even in other people's homes. Nor is it the artist in carpenters, including some union carpenters, that make them prefer to "finish up the job right." Fred was a skilled amateur carpenter himself. Perhaps it was merely the carpenter in him. More likely it was the normal human craving, slightly exaggerated perhaps by habit, to make good things better. It isn't even confined to humans. Birds and beasts have the same proclivity—though to be sure in man it is sometimes perverted by the pecuniary

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consideration which we have begun to accept axiomatically as the only kind of effective "competition." It is so perverted, indeed, that even when men like brother Archie go in for civic house-cleaning their motives are apt to be questioned cynically. Work, which is as natural in a world made by and for it as eating, has been turned into drudgery for so many people for so long a time that the Hebraic slave conception of heaven has become a loafing place with expensive furniture and a decorative scheme so garrish that it would drive fastidious Fred Carroll to some other place.

Well, Fred's drawings were returned. "The public doesn't want character," said Horace, "it wants clothes." He begged Fred to get a new model—one that looks joyous, like a well-bred school girl at a dance. That's what the public wants. They don't want to think. They want to forget. Give us something in your old manner."

Fred redrew his girls. He attempted to imitate his former self—a most difficult thing to do. It is still more difficult to

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give an illusion of youth and joy when one is feeling desperate, though many have to do it every night of their lives. Fred made a valiant effort, but the former charm was gone. The urban touch had become suburban. He had not done figure work of late. Models were scarce in the country. . . . The drawings were declined. One of the new "cocky kids" got the job of illustrating Irving's best seller.

Molly was aghast. "The audacity of them! declining work of yours when they have a chance at it!"

"Well, they aren't in business for their health," said Fred trying to hide his chagrin, "they've got to publish 'what the public wants.' And the public wants to forget. Among other things, they have forgotten me, I fancy. My little reputation as a painter doesn't help much with the people who read Irving's stories. I'm like you, Molly, I dropped out too long. I'm afraid I've lost the hang of doing black and white."

This was doubtless true. The work of the cocky kid, a by no means cheap skate,

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was better than Fred's, though neither of the Carrolls would admit it.

Each tried to make light of it to deceive the other. Even this did not succeed. They were too well acquainted by this time.

Said Molly, "I can't be a model wife, or even a wife-model." She laughed and patted his shoulder. "All the same, I admire you for despising popularity."

"But I don't despise it, I love it," said Fred. "It would be lots of fun to have the girls along the avenue point me out again and say, 'That's Frederic Carroll.'"

"Which is it you love—that or the pretty girls?" asked Molly teasingly.

"Both," he answered. "When I get old enough not to get excited at a pretty face or a racing fire-engine, I want to die—if—that is—" with a glance at his sturdy children playing in the twilight outside—"if I can afford it."

"All right," said Molly, ignoring that last touch, "so long as you don't tell any of the others that you love them."

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"Why not?" he rejoined. "As for you, you know it already—I don't have to tell you."

"So I've noticed," said Molly. "Come along, its time to dress for dinner." For they still dined in state even though their meals were becoming meagre. She called the children in, and remarked to Fred: "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we live."

It is commendable to be facetious about our troubles, but that does not cure them. It is much easier to be humorous about them after they are safely over. The Carrolls kept this gayety going for a while, but the children in the mean time kept on eating. The habit had grown upon them.

Now that Fred was failing, both as a painter and a provider, married life became a confused disillusionment, home a place to get away from as often as he conscientiously could. But as he conscientiously couldn't very often, he stayed at home and became a nuisance to every one in it. The children were no longer a joy

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to him. When they came "romping" into the studio, after the orthodox manner of "little tots," with the smiling approval all children, dogs, and old ladies bestow upon men of his type, Fred trying to paint while knowing he couldn't, turned upon them like a traitor and drove them out with loud rage. And once when Molly flew to their rescue, he turned on her. . . . After that she would never be able to say, as some weeping widows do: "He never spoke a cross word to me!" These two had lived together all this time without a single vulgar row. Well, it's never too late to learn.

Now, it would be too bad if, after taking all the trouble to study an honest trade, and to slight it honorably for marriage; to master that difficult art also, to build a house and have it find itself, to beget a brood of children and have them well started—if then the whole edifice of a happy home, a good clean unit of the State, were to go to smash, spoiling not merely the work in the world this man was born for, but, most unkindly of all, the lives of those

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born to him and for whom he had slighted his work! That would be rubbing it in. It would seem such a sheer waste of good horse-power, efficient usefulness, and, alas! even character.

One would suppose that in the case of worthy couples like the Carrolls, doing the right thing in the right way; stanch upholders of our best institutions, yet valiantly shedding their cunning little caste prejudices; professed optimists, yet doggedly trying to maintain a family and a sense of humor at the same time; meeting poverty together bravely, yet stubbornly ignoring the fact that if they had not come together they need not have met it at all—in such cases surely we have a reasonable right to expect, or at any rate a sentimental habit of demanding, that the ordinary arrangement of cause and effect should be suspended.

And yet nature's law of the survival of the fittest ought to be inexorable. For how otherwise can we hope for justice or any sound optimistic philosophy? True, the ravens fed Elijah in the wilderness.

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But we have changed all that since then. The wilderness has been taken over by the Sterlings, has been made to bloom by the corporations. The natural resources of the earth which God gave to man, man has given to men by due process of law for the larger good. If the chirping Carrolls were to be fed by any ravens, the latter would have to raid cold storage warehouses and thus cut in upon the divine right of dividends.

Aunt Bella still believed that the Lord would not forsake them that feared him. Witness the case of Joshua who needed a few more hours daylight for the worthy purpose of slaying some more of his fellow-men. Possibly the war-correspondent's despatch got by the censor. The report must have been grossly exaggerated. It is so irreverent to believe in a kinder, juster God who does not break His own laws, giving us eyes to search them, intelligence enough to understand some of them, and capacity to formulate our own accordingly. If we have defied or amended His law so as to read: "The survival of the fittest *for*

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getting money," it is surely quite orthodox to request Him to change what we have wrought. But it would not be upheld by the Supreme Court. Somebody had to earn even Aunt Bella's unearned increment. Nowadays money does not descend from heaven like manna. Some of Aunt Bella's fortune was earned by African traders and African slaves; not all of it could have been earned by the business acumen of that shrewd ancestor (only by marriage) who had manufactured Medford rum. Other more or less honest traders and other more or less free slaves were doubling and tripling her fortune now in the slums.

No, a wiser and more practical course, one more in accord with our institutions, would be to make statutes compelling every one to be fit for making, or at least getting, money, or else prevent them from making marriages and begetting children, thus reproducing their unfit species—four little Carrolls, for instance, all possibly deficient in the commercial instinct, each very likely susceptible of marriage when the time came.

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To be sure, we are doing our best, without the aid of written laws. Law, we are told, is merely the established habit of the community. Despite the handicap of baccalaureate sermons, greater proportions of the youth of our land every year are wisely casting aside false ideas with their graduating gowns, in accordance with the unwritten law—"Seek ye first the kingdom of Wealth and its affluence and all else shall be added unto you." (See almost any class triennial record.) For they are taught now from the cradle that "Man's chief end is to glorify Capital and enjoy It forever."

Every year, likewise, the proportion of dreary boarding-houses increases, and the building of more or less chaste bachelor apartments is a flourishing industry. Already one woman in every seven, with or without a hungry heart, gains a livelihood by some other means than marriage, despite our best efforts to push back these sexless creatures into their true spheres by underpaying them.

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And as for children, despite the altruistic advice of Kaisers and their friends, the family—that is the "nice" family—is rapidly dwindling throughout our entire civilized world. In our country, according to unpleasant statistics, the old American stock will soon have disappeared entirely. We breed most of our consumers abroad now, or among the "lower classes" who have immigrated from abroad. The "intelligent classes" do not seem to like the prospect of their children or their children's children becoming commercial or domestic servants to the Sterlings' children. It is selfish. They ought to get a racial sense. The way to bring it about is by handing each individual a higher ideal. That is the way the church has cured the evils of corporate wealth.

But Fred Carroll was at last beginning to realize that he had committed the unpardonable sin. He had blasphemed against the unholy ghost which haunts so many of our homes. Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of Wealth.

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And Fred, poor hopeless sinner, had cursed money. He who does not worship the golden calf shall surely be trodden beneath its cloven hoof.

Well, now that he had been converted, he went to brother Archie to confess, hoping piously for absolution.

IV

Fred found his brother scowlingly busy in one of our huge, modern law offices occupying a whole floor in a tall sky-scraper and employing numerous alert underlings with very intelligent faces and extremely polite manners. The caller had to wait his turn. Then Archie saluted his brother with the cordial: "Well, what-can-I-do-for-you" briskness of a man of affairs—kind, though incisive.

Fred was businesslike enough to go straight to the point. "Archie, do you recall the time years ago when I skipped out to Paris, instead of 'accepting a position' Uncle Thomas offered me in his bank?

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You said I was a fool. I said I would show you. Well, I've come to say that you were right."

This was really too straight to the point. Those who come to lawyers for advice seldom state their cases so succinctly. The legal mind was perplexed. "What the devil!" said Archie, not being in his Sunday-school class, where they believe in the devil, but in Wall Street, where they don't.

Fred smiled drolly and shrugged his broad shoulders. "I'm thinking of 'drifting into money-making,' as father used to call it. Just how does one go about it, please?"

Archie looked at his brother a moment, then burst out laughing. "*You?* in business!" The elder raised his scowling eyebrows. "Are you crazy?"

"Pretty nearly. Or else, I'm just coming to my senses. Rather late in life, I suppose—not too late, I hope."

Archie, able lawyer, experienced in receiving confidences, trained for piercing

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below the surface to the essentials of things, detected a basis of seriousness under Fred's flippancy. Fred was not feeling very flippant! Still, we should hardly expect him to say, "Please be sorry for me." He was not given to telling hard-luck stories.

The elder brother had understood vaguely that affairs had not been going altogether well at The Meadows. He had been tempted more than once to supplement business advice with financial aid; would have done so, but for his younger brother's foolish pride, for which Archie had a frank admiration. He and his wife, the pink and placid Julia, often joked among their intimates about the artistic wing of the distinguished House, its happy-go-lucky life in the country; its self-centred narrowness; its picturesque ups and downs, and its humorous aptitude for finally arriving safely, like a well-crated picture—"this side up with care." . . . Therefore the more astonishing, this sudden announcement of surrender. Fred was too temperamental.

"Oh, come!" said the acting head of the

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house, not unsympathetically. "What's it all about? You're all right."

"Then everything else is all wrong."

"Oh, there are other things than money. You mustn't grab at fame and fortune both. Why be a hog?"

"I don't think I've been a hog exactly—not so's you'd notice it," said the painter with that shrug of the shoulders which still seemed to all the other Carrolls "Parisian" enough to annoy them. It was not "like *us*," as estimable Aunt Bella used to say. Fred added, "There may be other things than money, just as there are other things than air—but you can't *get* any of them without it; not even this fame business you mention. I haven't been bothering about fame much lately, Archie."

"Oh, you mustn't get so easily discouraged. Every man has his early struggles for recognition. He can't become a man otherwise. Don't give up your ideals!"

"Where have I heard all that before?" Fred mused aloud, with a slightly sarcastic smile. "I had my early struggles all right.

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I had them *early*. There's no kick coming about recognition. I've had all I deserve of that too."

"Of course, you have," rejoined Archie, changing his first tone to a very agreeable one. "Why, only last evening at the Century that distinguished French portrait painter—what's his name? that visiting Academician—said to me, 'Ah, so you are a brother of Frederic Carroll?' You see I had been bragging about it. I always do! 'What has become of your brother? He used to be in my atelier; one of my favorite *élèves—garçon de beaucoup d'avenir*,' or something equally complimentary. Why, we're all proud of you, Fred. You are 'the bright, particular star' of the family, as Uncle Thomas enjoys putting it."

But the widely reputed vanity of the artistic temperament did not purr in the orthodox way. A cynical smile drew down the corners of the artist's straight lips. "All right, Archie, I'm a perfect wonder! Let it go at that. But that doesn't seem to help Molly and the kids particularly."

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"Now, now, you mustn't get to worrying. It's bad for you. It's weak!"

"Yes, that's easy to say too."

Archie produced cigars. "Fred, we all have our little set-backs at times." Archie extended a lighted match. "I know how it is myself." He threw away the match. "Business is awfully slack just now—in fact, I would have stayed up in the country to-day but for a couple of directors' meetings and an important conference this afternoon. Fred, you don't appreciate your happy lot. I'm afraid you've taken to looking at the dark side of things. That's not like your old buoyant self. Why, you lead an ideal life! You don't appreciate your independence. You are your own master; you can work when you please and where you please —without saying 'by your leave' to any one! You have a happy home life, adorable children, a charming little place among those beautiful hills, in a delightful social set; you have the affection of your many friends, the respect of your competitors, and, best of all, the love and admiration of a

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lovely wife. Why, man! what more do you want?"

"Nothing," said Fred, who had waited passively; "except to pay for it."

Archie threw up his hands and laughed appreciatively; the wind had been taken out of his sails. A perplexed scowl succeeded his enthusiasm. When all the copy-book maxims are exhausted one has to open the book of life as it really is. But Archie, as it happened, had read both books more thoroughly than his brother. "Bad as all that, eh?" he asked solicitously. "What seems to be the trouble?"

Fred, his reserve now melted by brotherly sympathy, dumped out the facts—the bare results. He did not dwell on the causes. Besides, he did not understand them, himself.

Archie looked grave. Here was an important matter to consider after all. Artists and other impractical children really needed guardians. Fred ought to have come to him long ago. "Look here, Fred, I still believe in you. I have always done

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so, ever since the family tried to starve you out in Paris—and didn't succeed." He hesitated, looked out of the window. "Just as a favor to me, why not let me finance you over this hard place. Now, don't get uppish! That sort of thing is done every day here in the Street. I'm willing to invest in your future; so you ought to be willing to let me, if you believe in yourself."

"But I don't! I can't tell what's the matter, Archie, but somehow I've lost it. I'm afraid I should never pay dividends on your investment."

"Well, what if you didn't? Great Scott! Aren't we brothers? I could stand it. I've made more money than is good for me, as it is."

"Perhaps you could stand it," said Fred, "but *I* couldn't. I don't care to be helped. Thank you, Archie. I want to help myself."

Archie glowed internally. After all, blood will tell, he thought. Fred was a true Carroll. More could hardly be said for any one.

"What do you want to do?"

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"Make money—the only thing to do, when you're married. It's wrong to do anything else."

"And you think you can do that, do you?" Archie could not restrain a laugh, but it was not an unkind laugh. Family ties are often stretched, almost to the breaking point, but—if they do not break—like elastic bands they snap back with sudden strength when the tension is released by trouble. These two had always admired but never appreciated each other until the present moment. Archie felt an almost overpowering tenderness for his young brother, the ancient clan passion, recalling as it always does to brothers their boyhood days, when the smaller was aided in his fights with bigger boys—from other clans—no matter how they may have quarrelled (and appalled Aunt Bella) when together alone. Archie (oh, that we should have to expose it in a Carroll!) could almost have embraced his younger brother, like a member of one of those absurd Latin races. But (never fear!) Archie being a true Carroll himself, of the

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noble Anglo-Saxon strain, infinitely superior in every way, only said: "By the by, have you anything on for the rest of the day?"

"Oh, I'll go back to my charming home in the charming hills," Fred replied with a laugh, "to my lovely wife, my adorable children, my affectionate friends, and all my other valuable assets, and try to turn out work." He paused. "I feel about as much up to it as you would be to win the hundred-yard dash after being licked in a mile run." Archie had been an intercollegiate champion in his undergraduate days.

But the lawyer, who had won greater prizes since that time, though none, by the way, of which he was more proud, ignored the aptness of the complimentary simile. He was watching his brother's tired eyes, saw lines about them that were new to him. "You'll do nothing of the sort," he said, after the manner of years ago. "You are going up to the University Club now, where we can thresh this thing out over a bang-up luncheon. There's no one there to inter-

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rupt, at this time of day, except doctors, and naval officers, and a few abstracted literary fellows. I'll telephone for the runabout and we'll take a spin out on Long Island. I need some fresh air myself."

"I thought you had an important conference," said Fred.

"Oh, that doesn't amount to anything." It might have amounted to one of Archie's enormous fees, but this other conference now seemed more important.

"All right," said Fred, slangily, "you're on!" But his eyes glistened. He too had recollections of boyhood rescues, and he felt safe in Archie's hands. He had snapped back unconsciously, unwillingly, into the old attitude of hero worship for the wonderful Archie, the eldest son of the house. So from that moment Fred, though now the head of a house of his own, felt and talked and conducted himself like a boy, in his brother's presence.

Archie diverted him, tactfully, until Fred was properly filled with good food and drink, for nearly all the modern Carrolls

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have learned this noble art of self-defence. Then said the leader of the Carroll clan, with gentle raillery, "All you fellows who are removed from the real world seem to take for granted that any fool can succeed in business. Roger has been talking the same way since he got into trouble with the college board of trustees over that radical book of his on the New Economics. Did you know that ninety-five per cent. of the men who go into business fail?"

"A still greater per cent. fail at painting," said the painter.

"But what makes you think you could succeed in business if you fail in art?"

"Well, you see," said Fred, sound humor sparkling up with Archie's vintage champagne, "the trouble is, I *succeeded* in art, so I thought I'd like to try failing in business. It might pay better, judging from some of the ninety-five per cent. one sees about town here."

Archie laughed applaudingly. He had his father's laugh. "What do you think you'd like to do?"

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"What's the use of having a legal adviser in the family!" answered Fred, with his shrug. "But if the kid can make good I don't see why I shouldn't." This referred to Harry, the youngest brother, now displaying a gold cigarette case on the floor of the Stock Exchange and, later in the afternoon, as Fred and Archie might see, a Bleriot monoplane out on Long Island; both evidences of affluence helping his credit not less than they horrified his loving Aunt Bella, who had given him up as hopeless, though she still prayed for his forgiveness, thus setting a good example to the Forgiver.

The two brothers had stepped into Archie's waiting car.

"I may be 'removed from the world,' and all that, but I'm not fool enough to rate that engaging youth's ability higher than my own," Fred pursued.

"Of course not," said Archie, "but—well, he has youth for one thing, and a specialized ability which has received a rigorous training for his agile capers. Like everything else, it is not so easy as it looks.

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That kind of work has its technic as well as yours."

"So has the work of any other *croupier*," said Fred, who, it is feared, shared certain of the "high-brow" prejudices. "I used to know one at Monte Carlo who learned his job in a few months. He is now at the head of a gambling house of his own at Ostend. So there ought to be some hope for *me*."

"But the trouble with you," said Archie smiling idly at the cynical simile, "is that you've learned and practised for years an entirely different game. You had a bent for business as a boy. But since then—everything you've done has twisted you off in another direction. No, I can't see you, Fred, as a business man."

Fred laughed and shuddered inwardly. "Neither can I," said he. "But I can't see my family starve. I ought to be able to make a living. I never heard of a Carroll who couldn't."

The car sped eastward over the bridge.

"I'd hate to see you throw over all you've

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won," said Archie, "just when you are coming into your own." He was beginning to feel the heart-breaking significance of his brother's mask of flippancy. He knew how these artists loved their work, and by the same token how it unfitted them for anything else.

"Then what the devil would you advise?"

They were now scudding past vacant lots on Long Island, once farms, now "suburban villa" sites, profitable to shrewd investors, desirable to commuting clerks who upheld the institution of marriage. Perhaps fresh air and the rapid motion promoted moralizing on the part of Archie—a thoughtful observer, this Carroll. "There are only two kinds of people in the world," he said, "those who earn what they do not get, and those who get what they do not earn." (He must have read it in a muck-raking magazine!) "You belong to the former class, and I belong to the latter. Now, any one who gets what he does not earn must, naturally, rob some one who earns what he does not get—for some one *must* earn it. And there

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you have our whole economic system in a moral nutshell."

Fred admired the epigram more than the doctrine. "If you don't believe in it—if you think *you* are robbing *me*, why don't you practice what you preach? You're not consistent."

"Simply because I prefer robbing to being robbed. I don't believe in ocean steamers racing in a fog, but I'd jump into the life-boat all the same if the two ships collided. I don't own the whole ship; merely myself. I'm a helpless passenger."

"I wish you'd show me where they keep those life-boats."

"I'm offering to give you a lift in mine."

"I want to paddle my own."

"You don't know how."

"I could learn."

"When I married Julia," Archie broke off, "she had more money than I had. I made up my mind that I would get more than she had—or else I shouldn't have a peaceful mind. Well, I've got the money, much more of it than any one, including

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Julia, knows. I'm proud of what I've done, I suppose. I used to be, at any rate. It still gives me a smiling comfort when I know people are thinking: 'Oh, yes, he married money.' But I somehow haven't yet secured that peaceful mind! I'm free to say I earned a bit of what I've got in the practice of my profession. You know how hard I've worked. But the bulk of it I 'made,' as we say—or won, rather, though I deserve something for my risk and my wisdom—in playing the Wall Street game with the inside tips I picked up in the legitimate pursuit of my profession, which is not, by the way, confined to showing corporations how to get around the law—not in *our* firm."

"Then what are you kicking about?"

"Oh, I'm not kicking—just commenting."

"Well, I shouldn't kick either, if I could do it."

Archie must have been disgruntled about something; his political ambitions, perhaps. Or was Julia "too fond of atten-

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tion?" Poor Julia, she had never been fond of much else—and now she was losing her figure. That's not comedy; it's tragedy. Well, in any case, why should Archie attack Status, unless he had a personal grievance? He had won out. Why should any man, worthy of the name, attack anything he considers wrong? For if he has lost by it, then he is a poor sport; envious. If he has won by it, he oughtn't to "kick"; inconsistent. Surely, this was no way to talk to an innocent younger brother who was "taking his medicine" like a man, only asking for a sporting chance "to play the game" against those who knew it well and had stacked the cards.

"I don't believe business is so bad as you make out," said Fred, thinking that Archie was trying to shock him or scare him off. "Look at all the good men in it."

"There are lots of them. The good men in it are all right. The institution is stronger than they are. Willing or unwilling, they are its victims. I'm 'good' myself. I give back little chunks of my winnings to the

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poor. I'm prominent in 'uplift movements.' I'm taking more time off every year for 'social service' and 'worthy causes.' I 'sacrifice my pleasures' for the sake of 'doing good to others.' In fact, I'm a model citizen—and incidentally I get a lot of fun out of it," he added smiling.

"But I mean, these big fellows," said Fred, "like Sterling; those 'higher up,' who make the game go. I don't believe they're all so rotten bad as you reformers try to make us believe."

"There's nothing Sterling would rather do than 'do good.' They all come to it in time, if they're decent inside, as Sterling is. There's nothing else to come to—for any one. He wants awfully to help education and religion, and, as you know, art."

"Well, he's doing it too—to the best of his bungling ability. He has helped a lot of your 'worthy causes.'"

"Oh, he's glad to help everybody, if everybody will only do as he says. As soon as they made him a trustee of the college—you can't run a college without money, and

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he was made to pay first, which is a much safer educational policy than electing trustees on trust—as soon as he got his hands on the plant he had Roger kicked out because the doctrine preached in 'The New Economics' was 'dangerous,' in Sterling's opinion. The book has had a popular vogue, unfortunately for Roger. Even Sterling read it."

"Poor old Roger," sighed Fred, forgetting his own troubles for the moment as he thought of a brother's. Roger was now lecturing in the wild, insurgent West. Sophia, his wife, and the children were "visiting" Aunt Bella.

"You know what happened," Archie went on, "in the case of that celebrated young preacher Sterling imported for his church from abroad at great expense. He mixed up in these new-fangled 'social service' notions, declined to confine his attention exclusively to the 'good old gospel' of individual salvation. So Sterling then exported him, also at great expense; and, no doubt, thought he was pleasing God and

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helping the cause of truth. Sterling believes in individualism."

"Say what you like about the old man," said Fred, "but he's no hypocrite. I know a fakir when I see one."

"Of course, he's no hypocrite. Very few men are. They are merely self-deceived. He believes far more sincerely than I do in business as it is done. Both these young men were hurting confidence in business, and that means hurting the country. Sterling honestly wants to help the country, not merely himself. I don't say that he was not right, according to his dazzling lights, in either of these cases, any more than when, for the cause of art, he threw you down, but——"

"He did not throw me down," interjected the painter hotly, "I threw him down."

"Yes, that's what Roger said. But he's got you both down at any rate. Maybe you both deserve it. All I say is that Sterling and even the best of his sort—good men, great experts in their line—are not neces-

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sarily the best judges of what is fit to survive in every other expert's line in the world. They don't know enough."

"Well, I should say not!" exclaimed Fred with amusement.

"And yet they are the ultimate authority in governing and guiding the destinies of the race—even its tastes, by example. They are the ultimate authority because they have the ultimate power. And they have the ultimate power, not because they are 'stronger' than some of the rest of you, but because all the rest of you give it to them. All of us are victims of the institutions we have made and can't afford to modify."

"Well, this is all very fine in theory, as Sterling would say, but I'm up against a practical proposition," put in Fred. "This doesn't help me educate my children. All I can infer is that fellows like Roger and me have no business marrying if we won't do as we are told by the Sterlings. I wish I had searched for Truth and cashed in my twenty thousand. At the time I thought

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the only decent thing to do was to decline it with thanks."

"It was. If Sterling ever found the Truth he'd drop dead," said the reformer. "I wasn't thinking about you. We're mere atoms."

"Eating atoms, however. You've got to think about me."

"Oh, you're all right. The only decent thing for a man physically and intellectually fit, as you are, is to marry, when he finds his mate, as you did. Don't you realize what you owe the race, my boy!"

"I can't afford to."

"That's only because the race does not realize what it owes you. The race can't afford not to realize such things much longer. The thing that causes marriage is the most individualistic thing in the world; the result is the most racial. Society, when it cuts its eye-teeth and becomes *practical*, won't allow marriage and the rearing of children to remain so individualistically difficult as it is to-day—that is, if society wants to save marriage and itself."

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"You don't advocate letting the State pay a man for the support of his own children and all that rot!" Fred was properly amazed.

"That's the same tone of voice once used in regard to the State's educating them. No, I wouldn't pay the man a cent for it. I'd pay the woman. Hers is the most important work in the world; and, as is usually the case, the real labor is underpaid by society, which reaps the profit. Women aren't rewarded for their great work. In most cases they are punished."

"Oh, now, any true woman——"

"Yes, yes, I know what you'll say. That's what they always say—especially the men. But the happiness and holiness of beautiful motherhood does not make the present arrangement just or wise. Nor is it working out *practically.*"

"All the same, if I can't take care of my own I deserve to suffer."

"But do *they?*"

Fred squirmed. He was suffering more than "they" were just now. "Molly and

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I," he said in a low voice, eyes averted, "had always been pretty fond of young things, dogs and so on. We didn't expect many other luxuries, being painters. Besides, I *was* making a good income, and—but, oh, I had no business having children! I see that now."

"You would have had no business not having them," said Archie.

"Well, I'd never let *any*body support *my* children. That's why I'm here to-day. I'd work for them, fight for them—I'd even rob for them, before I'd accept aid from the government."

"Such as free parks, for instance?" Archie put in. "Society is learning, gradually. It takes a long time, naturally, when there are so many prejudices, like yours, to overcome. Every improvement that gets into civilization has had to fight its way in, despite the opposition or indifference of the majority. In your case, you haven't robbed for your children. You've only worked for them and fought yourself for them, and now you're being robbed *by* them. You

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have been sacrificing yourself for them—often the worst crime a man can commit. You have only destroyed your efficiency for those who need it. Sacrificing your pleasure or your preference is all right, though even that can be overdone, but you have no business sacrificing your God-given self, if you can fulfil the object of your existence in any other way. The object of existence is seldom non-existence. Even Jesus Christ did not allow Himself to be killed until He had lived a life which changed the face of the world—though not its heart. Only the heart of an occasional individual one meets —usually a 'failure.'"

"My! but you are comforting, Archie. This solves all my problems, pays all my bills. How did you ever think of it!"

Yes, why all this attack upon established ideals? Why create popular discontent in the unpoisoned mind of an honest day-laborer willing to let good enough alone? Why all this talk about "robbery"—and from a lawyer, at that, sworn to uphold the sacred laws of property? Nearly all the

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nicest people get more than they earn. How else could they be nice? They would hardly have time. Who could give to the poor? There would not be nearly enough unearned increment. For that matter, there might be no poverty, and then how could we have any charity? and without organized charity how could we have any true Christianity? Besides, Archie failed to mention the mere detail of a practical solution. He had pondered these problems for nigh a dozen years, and had never discovered in all that time a perfect working substitute for a scheme of things which it has taken as many thousands of years to reach its present beautiful perfection. He must have been visionary. Therefore he ought to have left good enough alone. If there is anything sickly about our civilization, why don't these reformers compound a perfect prescription first? Then make a diagnosis after the autopsy? Meanwhile these questionings which are heard all over the world, even from some of our nicest people now (even in dear old America!),

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ought to be silenced. Discontent among the envious or these utopians ought to be dammed up until it bursts, like a French Revolution. That is the nicer and more conservative way of managing these little affairs.

"Well, Archie," said Fred as he stepped out of the car to take his train for home, feeling more respect for himself, more love for his brother, but even less confidence in the future than when he arrived. "I've had a bully time, but I haven't landed a job!"

"Oh, that?" asked Archie, as if he had not been pondering the difficult problem the whole time beneath the surface of his abstractions. "Why, that's perfectly simple. Will you take a job from me? I'm one of the rich robbers, you're one of the poor robbed; you'll have to take employment from some of us, you know. We've got you cornered."

"If it's something I can really work at," said Fred suspecting fraternal generosity.

"Go down to my shooting-box in North Carolina and paint that mountain I bought

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in cheap from the natives ten years ago, and those waterfalls at the bottom. I want to increase their fame and value. Take your whole family, so you won't be too lonely to do good work. But you'll have to agree not to do the waterfalls until you have fished all those streams this spring. I've had them stocked again with rainbow trout. In fact, you are not to do anything but loaf until after you have shot ruffled grouse on the mountain next fall. You are all in now, no good for work, and I want only 'the best that money can buy.'"

This seemed the only practical solution he could offer, as a result of a sympathetic diagnosis of the trouble with his little brother, whom he had watched and sounded thoroughly during the whole time that he might have been landing a big piece of business down town.

V

"Archie says," remarked Fred to Molly, after reading a letter which contained a large check from his brother (on account),

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"that we shall save him the cost of a caretaker. That is to save my face, God bless him!"

"God will, if it saves your health," said Molly, who was more concerned about her husband at present than about God or Archie.

"And he recommends their former governess, to teach the children. Hence this unnecessarily large check—which he calls a 'retainer.'"

"Yes, we are to be retainers upon his feudal estate," laughed Molly. "But Archie is a dear. I always have adored him since that Christmas when we tried to reform the family party."

"Waterfalls! Molly, can't you see me painting waterfalls! That's about as much my style as——"

"As buying pictures is Archie's. He never looks at them—not even at the portrait you did of Julia and her children!" . . .

Such is the pride and prejudice of the Carrolls that even though Fred, "the one that became an artist," now understood the

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capitalistic system, he could not like the idea of living on his generous brother. So he got to work upon the waterfalls, within a fortnight, declaring to Molly that he was now in splendid working shape. It is all right to live upon the bounty of some one you have buried or married; but who wants to live, like a parasite, upon the earnings of some one living? Nobody, except women, children, and capitalists.

"*Don't* work so hard!" pleaded Molly. "You'll kill yourself!"

"Well, what of it? I never could see any particular joy or virtue in sheer existence, mere breathing and spending exercises. There's nothing paintable down here. I can't make anything decent out of it."

"But think of us!"

"I'm doing so all the time. You'll have to be supported by Archie and Aunt Bella sooner or later. One less will make so much the more to go around." Now surely this was morbid. Any healthy man whose family "has money" ought to feel secure. Think of the many who lack that comfort.

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Fred should have been delighted, and gone fishing.

"But, dear, you know," said Molly shamelessly, "Aunt Bella can't last much longer and then we can go abroad and get a new start in life. Oh, think of being free from everlasting worry!" Such a heartless way to talk about a good old lady who had never hurt Molly, except by saying recently that Fred had forsaken the ways of his fathers and deserved humbling.

"I suppose you'll say next that you won't accept your inheritance, especially as it's going to be a big one, from what Archie tells us." For Archie had been heartless too, though more tactfully so. He had merely said: "Some day you and Fred will be well fixed for life."

"Won't accept it, eh?" answered Fred. "Just you watch me!" Then he added, "Poor old Aunt Bella, I hope she isn't suffering much. I really ought to go and see her—but how can I? I am painting pretty waterfalls. Good old Archie!"

Well, as it happened, Fred did not finish

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the waterfalls, and did not remain as a retainer on his brother's baronial estate. The years of overwork, overworry, and disillusionment were too much even for a clean Carroll constitution. He came down with nervous prostration and moved on to a sanitarium. There he had to accept still more bounty from his relatives. "Complexes," said the famous neurologist, "dissociations. Half the men in this city are more or less inclined that way. In most cases it can be traced directly or indirectly to the greed for money. Money isn't worth it. Why should they want it?" The bill was enormous. Archie and young Harry fought to pay for it. For all the Carrolls had rallied about the invalid with a rush, even distant Carrolls who never appeared except at weddings and funerals wanted to know "if there was anything they could do." For the word had gone forth that a Carroll was in trouble.

When Fred had passed through the black period, during which he hated his wife and

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all who were dearest to him—a symptom difficult for the neurologist to explain clearly to little Molly—and when he was beginning to see infinite possibilities for "joy in mere existence," his wife at last was brought to see him. Others were paying her bills now, except such as she insisted upon meeting by raising violets for the market in place of tending her formal garden, and in giving drawing lessons to the younger Sterling children. For Molly was a true old-fashioned wife. Hence she was ill-trained for either these undertakings. But was helped because kind people were sorry for her.

Fred, however, had no room for worry about such things now; he was so glad to see her. And she no longer worried even about Fred; she was so glad to see him.

"Well," he said, "we still have each other, at any rate."

She made the girlish grimace at him which had attracted his fastidious attention at their first meeting, years ago. "Yes," she said whimsically, "that seems to have been the whole trouble."

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As she hoped, he broke into his old chuckling laugh. It was a good sign. She pushed back her hair, dropping her eyes instead of raising them, as was her way when making people laugh, characteristics which brought back a surge of goodly memories. "All the same," he said, drawing her down to him—Molly found him strong enough for that—"so far as I am concerned, if I had it to do all over again, why—I'd do it all over again! . . . Would you?"

There was an adorable look in her humorous eyes when she raised them to his. "I'm afraid so," she said. . . .

Perfectly irrational, of course, and perfectly right. Those who insist upon living rationally never live at all.

Therefore, we submit, that inasmuch as this rapidly middle-aging pair was now melting in each others arms, the institution of marriage is perfect, and admits of no improvement in its requirements and customs; that the mutual relations of civilization and the family fit into the scheme of present things as admirably as in the

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Patriarchate; that in this glorious age, it just so happens, men have spoken the last word on all important matters in the best possible world; and that now, finally and for all time, nothing shall ever be changed again on a spinning globe made by and for evolution, which has changed everything from the beginning, human nature most of all. Though, to be sure, "human nature never changes." Authority has so decreed, and, of course, that settles human nature and everything else.

VI

When the Fred Carrolls returned at last from abroad, brown and cheerful and serene, they took a house in town for the winter, and the gossips out in the country—for even the most refined and conservative colonies have been known to include a few—nodded their heads over the teacups and said: "That aunt of theirs must have left them more than we thought."

Aunt Bella's magnificent bequest for es-

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tablishing the "Arabella Carroll Memorial Neighborhood House" down on the East Side—whence much of her fortune had come and whither some of it dutifully returned—though hardly comparable with some of the other princely gifts of this golden age of organized charity, was nevertheless meritorious enough in size to get a head-line in the newspapers. The residue of the estate went, according to the will, share and share alike to dear Aunt Bella's beloved nephews and nieces. Now, as there were a number of these, a conservative reading between the head-lines had at first made Fred's portion only seventy thousand dollars, though there were others who stated authoritatively that it was at least seven hundred thousand, arguing that the very fact of dear Aunt Bella's being able to give so much to the children of the East Side showed that her estate was "much larger than at first estimated."

Fred had been appointed one of the trustees of the Neighborhood House. Members of the upper class who are too selfish to take

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an interest in the children of the poor, by their own free will, should be made to do so, by the will of a wealthy benefactress. So he had hurried back to America in time to attend the "ceremonies in connection with" the laying of the corner-stone. He was now sitting upon the platform, looking reserved and dignified, like a true Carroll at last, hearing what a good Carroll Aunt Bella had been and realizing how it felt to have, among other things, a fat heritage of high ideals.

He looked plump and prosperous in his eminently becoming London clothes—"well-groomed" is perhaps a more pleasing phrase, though it must be confessed that he had taken on weight during his residence abroad. It became him well, however. It made him more "distinguished looking."

But it is to be feared that Frederic Carroll did not appreciate his sacred trust nor the distinction of being a useful public citizen, for as soon as the ceremonies were over he stepped into his waiting limousine and dashed up the brilliant avenue as fast as the

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traffic regulators would allow, delighting in the opalescent twilight, the purple tones, and the pretty girls. So much so that he failed to see the nods of a couple of old pals of his who were walking and who nudged each other and smiled as he passed. He had regained his healthy exuberance during his absence. With rest came objectivity. He could see again. Morbid in-growing thoughts had vanished and he had reached a period in his artistic career where he could appreciate the charm of New York. He no longer sought for the beauty of the Old World in the streets of the new, as cubs do when just back from Paris with long hair and false ideals. He took and enjoyed what was set before him, asking no questions, and got more stimulation out of it than from a bottle of champagne.

"You missed a great moment," said Fred when he joined Molly over the tea-table, for his wife had refused to go. "There I sat shivering in my last summer's suit, my pockets full of unpaid bills, wasting two good hours of daylight, and trying to look

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"I hate Aunt Bella's public spirit," she cried vindictively

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worthy of my heritage of high ideals while I listened to the mayor praise Aunt Bella's public spirit."

"I hate Aunt Bella's public spirit," cried Molly vindictively and she threw the afternoon paper describing the memorial across the room.

Financially speaking, the Carrolls were at the present moment worse off than ever. They merely *seemed* to be better off. But that was not their fault. Indeed, they were so guiltless that they never even suspected it. Their pecuniary sensibilities were still quite rudimentary, despite all they had been through. They knew how Aunt Bella had treated them, and assumed, if they thought about it at all, that others could guess by the Neighborhood House. There is nothing like having a clean conscience. But, again, nothing looks so guilty as innocence. Everything they had done had been in the interest of art or economy. It looked like the evidence of ease and solvency.

When the residuary legatees found that their respective portions would be a scant

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ten thousand apiece, Archie Carroll, who was one of the executors of the estate, being a good, conservative, business-like fellow, invested his legacy and the very considerable executor's fee in Steel Fives. Being also a notably kind elder brother, full of sound advice, he had suggested that the unbusiness-like Fred should follow his example.

But Fred did not see it that way. "That may be wise for you, Archie," said the artist broad-mindedly, "but I can't afford such luxuries. It would not be business-like. I believe in putting one's capital into one's business." So he packed up, took the family to Europe, and stayed there until he got his legacy all nicely spent.

He had been bankrupt in health, hope, and ideas. The interest on a few Steel Fives would not have restocked him in these very necessary resources for the pursuit of his trade. The stay abroad restocked him. He also accomplished some very good work over there, sketching with a congenial group of fellow-craftsmen, who knew his

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work, who liked him, who talked his own language. He got the inspiration of a change of scene. He studied the new schools. He fell into the swing of a new manner of his own. He achieved a new grip on life and a new view of his own life in perspective.

One of the chief advantages of going abroad is what you see at home when you get back. The Carrolls saw a whole row of mistakes grinning at them from the rear. But they also saw a crowd of opportunities beckoning in front. There was a chance to make good after all. "You are still young. You must get back into the city, Fred. If not with the family then without us," said Molly, who could see sometimes better than he could. "Don't think about the family, think about your work. Think what the big men over there told you about it."

It so happened that on the steamer coming home they fell in with an old friend of theirs, an admirer of the work of Frederic Carroll, a gentleman of leisure who classified

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in the preliminary trial heats for long-distance culture prizes, as "artistic and literary" inasmuch as he possessed a valuable collection of ceramics and went in for old prints and first editions, a flabby soul but a kindly one. He said he hated New York in winter—he was always hating things—and proposed trading houses for a year. To be sure, his town house, very nice and spacious as town houses go, was not so comfortable and complete as the Carrolls' country house, though it would have rented for five or six times as much money. The Carrolls, however, were so lacking in pecuniary consciousness that they never even thought of this sordid, commercial view of the matter. They hesitated only because they knew the house and wondered if they could stand the color of the drawing-room. "But it will only be for one year," as Molly reminded Fred, and "beggars cannot be choosers," as Fred cheerfully reminded Molly. So they graciously accepted, and Fred's friend had the honor of saying to his acquaintances, "I have taken the Fred Car-

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rolls' place for the winter—a simple little cottage, but it's only for a year."

The rest of the illusion of affluence followed as naturally and easily as brother Archie's smooth-running car. Archie still felt so cut up over Aunt Bella's public spirit that he had taken his family off on a long cruise among the Bahamas and had begged the Freds to use his car during the winter because George was the best chauffeur he had ever had and he did not want to lose him. Fred did not feel like accepting it at first, but Molly reminded him that he had refused to accept anything from Archie for the portrait of the latter's wife; a most interesting portrait, showing the frivolous Julia (well known as a mollusk in the Carroll family gossip) posing as a perfect mother with the children entwined about her in a graceful group while she wore an appropriately low-cut evening gown.

"To-day in town," reported a member of the colony, "I saw Fred and Molly Carroll in their brand-new limousine. It's a very

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smart one with an expensive purr and, my dear, they have put their crest on the door."

Now, it may be that the Carrolls considered crests and similar bravery rather unnecessary in the land of the free, especially when so fresh from a very different kind of colony in France, with different aspirations and absurdities. It is good for Americans to go abroad and see some real democracy occasionally. It's so quaint and old-fashioned. However, Fred could not very well paint out the crest, even though he was a painter. Besides, it was only for one year.

Archie's expensive limousine, by the way, was worth Fred's entire legacy. And yet instead of decreasing his capital it only seemed to put the Carrolls' fortune up another peg. It now soared well above the million mark, and they seemed to be getting richer every day.

"That chauffeur of Archie's is a nice fellow," said Fred to Molly. "He's lent me one of his fur coats." Why not? George, a clean-cut, well-educated young American, had three coats and he had nothing against

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Fred. Even the coat was noted by members of the colony, but Molly's clothes, of course, occasioned more comment. "Doucet, I *think*, so rich and yet so simple—that indescribable something."

The acquisition of Molly's new outfit was characteristic of the Carrolls. "Before we spend all this money," Fred had remarked in a business-like manner at Paris, "you've got to get a lot of new things."

"We can't afford it," protested Molly weakly but with a gleam in her eye.

"We can't afford not to," replied her more practical husband. "Things are so cheap here, if you know where to get them, and the Lord knows when we'll ever be over again." So, with the aid of her husband's talented eye for color and design, Mrs. Carroll became the complacent possessor of a brand-new trousseau, which was not only of the latest mode—any other wealthy woman could achieve that—but also of a subtle originality which many even wealthier women coveted. It should be added that Molly only consented to this extravagance upon

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the express understanding that Fred would get a new outfit for himself while in London. That was the way they usually compromised in the interest of economy. For "if I can afford it then you can," she declared logically. And so they dawned upon New York looking smart and quietly distinguished.

Now, in town, of course, the Carrolls and their wealth were not taken so seriously. There were so many other people to think and talk about, and there was hardly enough wealth to make an impression upon our great and glorious metropolis—only two or three millions. The self-centred city hasn't time to go into details or look beneath the surface. It takes you on your face value.

It seems that this well-known painter and his charming wife had been living on the Continent for some time, where his pictures had been making all kinds of a hit at the Salons. They were now comfortably settled down for the season in New York to "execute a few commissions" and to have

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as good a time as possible, like every one else, before returning to their "artistic" country place and their beloved garden in the spring. For the rest, they had an atmosphere of cheerfulness and success combined with quiet dignity and comfort. We all like cheerfulness better than gloom.

VII

The guests now assembled at Molly Carroll's pretty dinner-table were of this broad elective acquaintanceship, old friends and new, lasting or temporary. Formerly the Carrolls had shown a regrettable tendency, whenever in town, to drift into the quick-whirling eddies of the "literary and artistic" crowd—despite the kindest regards for the main stream, except where too sluggish to be endured. Now, however, they were practising what they had often preached. They despised narrowness. Perhaps they wished to spread the light. Perhaps they wished to sell some pictures.

At any rate, their guests of honor this

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evening were none other than Mr. and Mrs. Sterling—the new Mrs. Sterling, the old one having died. Possibly the new house, which the colony now called Sterling Castle, had proved too much for the old wife, though with a housekeeper and an assistant housekeeper and thirty servants—not to speak of keeping a couple of smiling social secretaries about the place—even the barocco exuberance oughtn't to have troubled her. As a matter of fact, she had liked it, poor thing. It made her feel valuable, just as did the liveried servants.

The new Mrs. Sterling had been a successful emotional actress. She was still an actress, playing the star part of the wife of a billionaire, and playing it quite successfully too, though not emotionally so far as one could detect. She made an impressive entrance with her new master, wearing about her neck the dog collar of plump and priceless pearls he had given her as well as a peck or two of diamonds expensively crowded upon the covered and uncovered portions of her beautiful body.

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She had not wanted to come here very much. She had known plenty of painters in her brilliant but less affluent past. She had not played her new part long enough to tire of it as yet. She still felt the glamour of rich people, just as some rich people feel the glamour of the greenroom. But she felt more reconciled to her husband's wishes after she had entered the house, which, though not comparable with her own, was surprisingly fine for a mere artist.

The Carrolls had not particularly wanted the Sterlings either, but they had never had a chance before to return the former Mrs. Sterling's invitation of several years ago, so they were taking it out upon the second Mrs. Sterling. Besides, in their present mellow cheerfulness, they wanted the old man to see that they cherished no animosity against him for that matter of the Search for Truth; though, as it happened, Sterling had borne up very well without a Frederic Carroll decoration on his walls, as could be seen by his genial expansiveness. His country place had proved a great success; a good

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many of the colony thought it a fine house, and all of them had decided to accept the Sterlings (as he had cynically known all along), and incidentally he had become a great patron of the arts, as any one could see by the way he patronized all artists.

So it was not altogether surprising that he had insisted upon accepting this surprising invitation. He was more surprised to find the artist so comfortably established. "This explains it all," he said to himself, thinking of the Search for Truth. It was too bad. Painters ought to be poor. For this collector of paintings, railroads, and other bric-à-brac held to the orthodox faith that for those who do the real work of the world, like manipulating the stock-market or jacking up the tariff, money was a good thing, but not for artists. It makes them lazy.

It is possible that Molly derived a little mischievous delight from showing the Sterlings that a simple dinner could be good and that even better people would come to it than came as yet to Mr. Sterling's enormous

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château on the Avenue. She seated him next to Mrs. Langham.

It was Aline Langham, the distinguished novelist, who not only wrote of the highest society, but belonged to it—a distinction far from common among writers in democratic America. For the most part they have to put up with the company of those who, like themselves, make books and pictures, not those who buy such wares, though it stands to reason that it is more delightful to associate with those who consume products than with the men and women who create them. But Mrs. Langham could not only satirize in fascinating detail the expensive "entourages" of our American aristocracy, but she possessed such things herself, as might be seen when she took the air in the park in order to become refreshed for satirizing the vanity of riches. But good Queen Victoria endured a far more complicated domestic ritual every time she "drove out," and although she wrote some letters of which none of her family need be ashamed, the late queen could not have written one of Mrs.

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Langham's books to save her crown. In America all our women are queens. They deserve everything that makes for the dignity and grace of living, and those who jeer at such concomitants of an advanced stage of civilization only show that they are out of touch with the Zeit-geist of true democracy or that they are envious, or else, worst self-revelation of all, that they have not had such things for many, many generations in their own family—an admission no self-respecting American should care to make.

Now the Carrolls, in the innocence of their hearts, had placed Mr. Sterling next to Mrs. Langham, supposing that the novelist would enjoy the opportunity of "studying" him. But that experienced lady knew the Sterling type by heart already. It is quite too common in America nowadays, thanks to a beneficent combination of natural resources and unnatural laws. But it is well known that there aren't nearly so many newly rich painters. Accordingly the authoress was quietly studying her host and hostess instead. Being a psychologist, she

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was naturally interested in observing the effect of a sudden accession of wealth—not much, to be sure, only five millions—upon a conscientious painter who had not only an eye for color but also for women, and upon his rather clever wife, who was ambitious not only for him but also for social success. Every woman, of course, was socially ambitious. It was sheer affectation, inverted snobbery, to pretend otherwise. Thus the unsuspecting Carrolls bade fair to be impaled upon Mrs. Langham's pen and held up before the magnifying-glass of her projective imagination to serve as a useful example to the world, Fred meanwhile feeling pleased that this brilliant and delightful woman had fallen under Molly's charm, and Molly that Mrs. Langham was one of those gifted beings who appreciated the genius of Frederic Carroll.

In passing it is worth observing that Mrs. Langham was a little perplexed to account for the meagreness of the Carrolls' ménage —only one man servant, and a poor selection at that—for being a true literary artist

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she always observed servants with the carefulness of a highly paid housekeeper. Home has been woman's only sphere for so long that it seems difficult to break the immemorial habit of the sex. The Carrolls' simplicity appealed to her sense of fitness. It showed a commendable restraint, an artist's scorn of worldly display. It might be a pose, but a very clever one. Nevertheless she prophesied with a mental smile that they would soon grow tired of this oversimplicity. The dinner itself was very simple too, and she wondered how this rather inexperienced woman, new to New York, had discovered that simple dinners just then were very smart. The quick adaptability of the American wife is always interesting to novelists. It would be worth a paragraph.

All this would doubtless have interested the Carrolls if they had only been aware of it. For Fred had run up such a large bar bill at the club purchasing wines for these simple return dinners that his name had been posted for non-payment of house charges. However, he would have been

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willing to admit that the dinner was good, and, in fact, he complimented Molly upon it after their guests were gone and they were talking it over. "Big, heavy dinners," he said, "are so vulgar, Molly, especially when attempted by simple people like ourselves. The way some men and women in this town, even in our trade, throw a bluff—even some of the real ones—it makes me sick!"

Now, there were others among those present who took thought of Molly's dinner and its relation to her husband's wealth. There was Carlton Stillman, the art critic, and his clever wife, who had sharp, black eyes which watched everything. Being in the art-critic business they were both rather critical of artists just as patrons of the arts sometimes patronize them. Mrs. Stillman tried not to be aware of Molly's very successful evening gown; for she feared it was a Paquin; and she sniffed inwardly at the frugal meal. She thought the Carrolls rather stingy. Now, if she and Carlton ever came in for any money—but then they never

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would; they had no rich aunts to endow them. Some people had all the good-luck.

Carlton Stillman was an old friend of Fred's who had known him "when." So as he had failed as a painter himself it was difficult to accept Fred's affluence and his quiet air of having had it all his life as amiably as, for instance, the Sterlings, though they, it should be remembered, had even greater wealth. Nor could he look down upon it with the godlike detachment of a Mrs. Langham, who had the novelist's indifference to the vanities and jealousies of poor human nature. When the Stillmans first entered the drawing-room and caught sight of these personages, Carlton and his wife exchanged glances as much as to say, "Dear me! Aren't we flattered?" They were, as a matter of fact, rather pleased but were too much afraid of showing it. So Carlton maintained a satirical smile all the evening and confided to the woman he took out, a broker's wife, that all this was going to ruin Fred Carroll, as a painter. "He used to be a very good sort, simple and un-

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affected," said the critic, "but now that he has come in for all this wad of money—well, I see his finish." And Carlton shook his head sadly. It's the critic's function to analyze and interpret. "He hasn't been doing much lately anyway. I suppose he has been sitting down and waiting for this to fall into his lap."

"I wonder what they see in people like the Sterlings?" replied the broker's wife. She had a soul above money, not being the member of the family who had to earn it. She was quite literary and artistic, and devoted not a little of her husband's lucky turns to these worthy causes.

"Oh, like seeks like," Stillman answered sagely. "Wealth wants to play with greater wealth. I shouldn't be surprised if Molly intended eventually to marry off that innocent little daughter of hers to one of those young reprobates of Sterling's by his first wife."

Another friend of early days was there, but he did not take it so hard—the husband of the broker's wife. He had been one of

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Molly's admirers many years ago, but had got over it enough since his own "ideal marriage" to admire Fred as well as Molly. He was an athletic, generous-minded fellow, and was just glad to see these two delightful friends "so well fixed." Indeed, he thought seriously of buying a picture—for he had decided this evening that they must be pretty good pictures—if the market went up another point, especially as he felt grateful for the opportunity of meeting the famous Mr. Sterling, "one of the biggest men in the country." He appreciated the honor, it seems, somewhat more than his wife did. In fact, he watched the big man all the evening, remembered every word he uttered, laughed emphatically at all the big man's little jokes and told his partners about it the next morning in the office.

Young De Courcey was there too, he who had sought and found Truth for Mr. Sterling. He sat on Mrs. Langham's right, and, apropos of the propinquity of his patron on her left, he asked her facetiously if she had ever seen that work of art. "Well, it's

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worth going miles to see," he went on humorously, "though perhaps," he concluded in a worldly whisper, "Mrs. Sterling's house is 'going some' for you." Then turning brightly to the lady on his other side he told her about it too. She was the art critic's wife, and wives should always be interested in their husband's profession. When the conversation became general he decided to tell the rest of the table about it all at once. Then they would all know it. "But all the same," he remarked apropos of something his host was saying, in the authoritative manner of hosts at the end of the table, as to the relative advantages of town and country for working—"all the same, when one wants the work of real genius to gladden one's ancestral halls in the country, one comes to town to look for it. Isn't that so, Mr. Sterling?" he added, with a laughing glance at Fred. For he had never heard the truth of Fred's connection with the Search.

Now, the great man had not been altogether happy either with Mrs. Langham on

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his right or his hostess on his left. He wanted to talk high art with them, and they insisted upon talking high finance with him. It rather hurt his feelings. It was somewhat as when certain sloppily dressed women called on the Carrolls and talked exclusively to Fred, except when they turned to Molly in pauses saying, "And how are the children?" So Molly ought to have sympathized with him. At any rate, he became so piqued that then and there at Molly Carroll's little dinner he decided to give a large, expensive art museum to his native city out West where his mill-hands were dying of typhoid according to the law of the survival of the fittest. And he did so, too, though Molly never got a line of credit for it. But when this glib young painter turned to him in that assured manner he was thoroughly provoked. In the respectful silence which followed De Courcey's facetious appeal, the great man smiled sardonically and said, "If you want to know the reason you got my library to do, it was because my old friend Fred here recommended you. I

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offered him twenty-five per cent. more than you got, but he turned the job down."

The hostess laughed quickly to make it plain that it was all good-natured chaffing. So did the host and several of the guests, most of all young De Courcey himself. But after that he stared at the centre-piece and remained silent, crushed by the heavy hand of capital. That's the way with these infant industries unless we protect them.

Up to this point in the dinner De Courcey had been genuinely pleased at seeing a nice, quiet fellow like Fred in the lap of luxury. "He's a thorough-bred," he had remarked to Mrs. Langham. "Fits the frame so well." But now discovering himself under obligations to Carroll he disliked him for it. "What does he amount to, anyway?" he said to himself, with a glance at Fred, seated at the head of a brilliant dinner-table looking urbane and serene, and apparently without a care in the world. "Simply because he has money is no reason why he should patronize *me*." Alas, one must pay the price, even for wealth. And after that

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whenever any one at the club said, "Good old Fred's wad of money doesn't seem to have changed him," De Courcey always added, "But he takes too much pains to show that it hasn't changed him. He thinks we are thinking about his money all the time, simply because he is."

And yet it is safe to say that, as the dinner party now arose, nearly every one at the table had given thought to the Carrolls' fortune, liking or disliking them for it, except the Carrolls themselves, who seemed to like every one (including themselves), beaming graciously upon all alike and now glancing at each other by way of mutual congratulation upon the success of the dinner.

Indeed, as Fred gallantly drew back Mrs. Sterling's chair, he felt so elated and expansive that he bestowed upon her a killing glance and said: "How unkind of you to go!" though he was longing manfully for a cigar by this time.

"But I am coming to your studio on Thursday," the emotional actress returned,

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"to see that painting you were telling me about."

"If you'd only let me paint *you!*" he sighed, though, having a keen eye for color and women, as Mrs. Langham surmised, he observed that he had been anticipated.

"Ah, we can talk that over when you dine with us next week," said Mrs. Sterling, as he bowed her into the drawing-room beside the apparently unobserving authoress. Then, leading the men away to the library, he held a light for the broker's cigar and hospitably tried to talk about the unsettled condition of the market, though being utterly ignorant of such things he made a mess of it.

"Ah, ha," thought the observant art critic, with the satirical smile. "That's what interests him now. Well, he'll probably lose it all. Then he may come to his senses and do some good work." Stillman loved art for art's sake.

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VIII

Before the season was over Fred and Molly occasionally touched that effulgent pinnacle of success which brought the illustrious Carroll name among the names of others present who had possessed wealth and social eminence as far back as the memory of the oldest society reporter could reach. Surely this sort of success ought to prove demoralizing to an impressionable young painter, even without the comforting consciousness of wealth—adorable women looking into his eyes and telling him how they adored his work, which they had never seen; teas in his studio so that they could see it and adore afresh; younger painters asking him to come to *their* studios and kindly criticise *their* work. All this giddy whirl of flattery might reasonably be supposed to turn his head.

But, regrettable as it may seem, it did nothing of the sort. Perhaps the atmosphere of feminine admiration made him gallantly ambitious to prove worthy of the praise of the women. Perhaps the attitude

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of respect made him conscious of his responsibilities as an adviser of youth. But more likely there was nothing conscious about it. He was working too hard by day and playing too hard by night. He hadn't time to think about himself, nor inclination; he was too much interested in other people and outside things. It was an unconscious stimulation—the subtle, psychic influence of approbation. At any rate, he was getting through a lot of work and doing it well. Some natures thrive on excitement.

Such uplifts are quite as necessary as the dull weight of adversity, though Carroll's New England ancestry would have been loath to admit it. As Mrs. Sterling told him one morning in the studio, in the old days—she was beginning to call them the "dear old days"—she could never do her best except when she felt that the audience was loving her. "No wonder you were successful," said the painter, and he was spurred on to do *his* best upon the head he was making of her, even more than in his own dreary old days by the prattle of chil-

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dren's voices or the rattle of butchers' wagons. And at tea time, instead of going home, he went to the club. And this used to be "the children's hour." It was now father's hour. 'Tis sad, but it's better to work for them than play with them.

The head was shown at the mid-winter exhibition of the Academy of Design. It attracted considerable attention. Those who did not like him said that this was because of the interest in the subject rather than the skill of the work. It attracted attention all the same. Moreover, it received an honorable mention in the competition for the Bronson prize. Some of his acquaintances were puzzled. They had hardly expected him to do anything really good. He was supposed to have dropped out of the running now that he was rich and lazy.

"I always told you he could do serious work—if he only tried," was the "what did I tell you?" comment of those who had once said, "great promise," and had not lost faith in him.

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Mrs. Sterling had a great deal of faith in him. She bought two of the pictures that he was preparing for his own exhibition in the spring, before he had a chance to exhibit them. She, too, had become a patron of the arts. It ran in the family. One of the canvases she bought appealed to her as so divine—this was her word at present, "divine"—that she could hardly stand it, so she turned her face away and wept beautifully. She was beginning to bore him dreadfully. That was why he said such nice things to her. She dropped into the studio at all hours, but as she sometimes brought friends and some of them were likely to buy pictures, Fred, as the father of a family, could not very well put her out.

In May came the "Exhibition of Paintings by Frederic Carroll," at McPherson's.

It could hardly be said that the gallery was crowded, though Mrs. Sterling testified humorously that there was standing room only. At any rate, never before had so many people come to see his pictures, not only the usual sprinkling of those who paint

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or write or collect, but others who had gone to their country places by this time made special trips to town in high-powered cars. Perhaps their fluttering presence irritated certain of the critics. In the old days they had usually dismissed Frederic Carroll with a brief commendatory notice. But now that he was favored by the financial and social gods, the critics discussed his work in long condemnatory notices, beginning "After a long silence," charging him with dilettanteism, with displaying his indifference, with engaging in subtleties.

Some of them, however, treated him more kindly and spoke of his "distinction of manner." Fred liked that. Another, a young man with elaborately fashionable clothes, said, "He paints like a gentleman," which offended Fred's professional pride. Carlton Stillman summed it up authoritatively thus: "Leisure should be used for taking pains, not for showing that one is free from the necessity to do so." And he implied a scorn of being understood. For Art has to do with things as they seem, not as they

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are. Thus a work of art can seem so many different things to so many different men.

"You mustn't let a little thing like that bother you," said an older painter to Fred. "It's much better than being dismissed with a light pat on the back and then forgotten."

Another painter, a man whom Fred had never met, wrote a letter to the newspaper defending Frederic Carroll from the charge of dilettanteism, and paying his respects to critics who didn't know paint when they saw it. "It is the ease that comes of years of labor," said the letter, "the confidence of a master hand."

"Now there," said Fred to Molly, "is a man that understands me."

All of this drew more attention to the art of Frederic Carroll. The picture-buying crowd did not mind the charge of dilettanteism. Perhaps some of them did not know what it meant; perhaps others did, and accepted the phrase at its etymological value. At any rate, both kinds became more interested in Frederic Carroll and his work—

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a man who "did not have to work unless he wanted to," and yet did good work, and won honorable mentions! There are always a few such noble souls. Every one respects them, rich and poor alike. . . . Things were coming the Carrolls' way at last. Well, why not? It seems no more than fair play. Even a mercenary mistress is human. The Freds had snubbed her enough in the past to make her set her cap for them, cajole them, win them. Was it not all "cause and effect"—"the survival of the fittest?"

McPherson the art dealer dropped into the studio one day. "Say! we didn't do a thing to 'em!" he said. "We must have another show in the fall. It's the pyschological moment."

"That's impossible," said Fred. "I've got to have some rest this summer."

"What have you in these old portfolios?"

"Old stuff, done several years ago, never exhibited. It's rotten."

But when McPherson looked at it he pronounced it "swell." He said: "It's in a different mood, but it's good work." Molly

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backed up the art dealer. So did an older painter, one of the big ones whose opinion Fred respected. And now a curious thing happened. Fred put his head on one side, squinted his eyes and decided that it was not so bad after all. In fact, he was quite pleased with some of the canvases which he had once cursed in impotent despair. "A work of art can seem so many different things to so many different men." Fred was a different man now that fame was thinking about him.

IX

But, alas! before the exhibition took place in the fall, just when the tide was turning, when articles were being written about the art of Frederic Carroll, when he was receiving honors, such as invitations to lecture before select gatherings of young women, when all life seemed bright with promise and good cheer and uplift, just when Fred and Molly were about to take another step heavenward in New York, the sad but in-

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teresting news went out that the Carrolls had lost their money.

"Yes, my dear, they've given up their town house and have moved into one of those co-operative studio apartments. They have rented their own place in the country for three years. They have even given up their car!"

"I suspected that something was the matter all along," said the broker, to whom Fred had tried to talk stocks. "He's hopeless in money matters."

"This explains their apparent lack of public spirit when it came to subscribing for charities," said the broker's wife.

"It all goes to prove," said De Courcey to some of the fellows at the club, "that you never can tell by outward appearances what is going on inside of a man."

"I always knew that Fred wasn't a snob at heart," said another, "but I suppose he was worrying a good deal and that affected his manner." This explained it all.

Every one agreed that Fred and Molly were showing a beautiful spirit. They ut-

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tered not one word of complaint. To be sure, they disliked giving up their house in the country, but they hoped some day to get it back again. Meanwhile the children were old enough to thrive in town and the family must follow the job. They liked their bright, airy duplex apartment far more than the house they had resigned. Even Molly's made-over Paris clothes did not sanctify her spirit, for she had intended to make them over all along. Paris styles are always a season ahead of New York's. But the women said she was taking it all so bravely. Even those who hadn't liked her now said so.

"Well, I told you he'd lose his money," said Carlton Stillman to his wife, with a smile of regret. "Now he'll settle down and *work*. He's got to."

And sure enough he had another exhibition, quite early in the fall! This showed how industrious he had been since he lost his fortune. And when Fred's selections from his early work which he had been touching up during the summer were exhibited at

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McPherson's, Carlton Stillman was the first to sound the praise of Frederic Carroll's "new" manner. "This more recent work sounds a deeper note," announced that well-known authority, "showing a more matured understanding of the inherent pathos and yet the inherent beauty of nature."

"It must be fine to be a critic," said Molly to Fred.

"But I always told you he was a sincere sort of chap," said Fred to Molly.

Perhaps the other critics felt the same psychic influence, or else like the other painters they all agreed to stand by good old Fred Carroll in his time of trouble.

"That's the way to make these lazy artists work," thought Mr. Sterling, looking on. And perhaps that was the way the rest of the buying public looked at it, for McPherson sold all of these pictures in the new manner and most of those left over from the heyday of Carroll's affluence. Not only that, but he asked for more. Fred refused. Not only because he knew better than to overstock his market, but because

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he had promised Mr. Sterling to take on a big decorative scheme for the foyer of the magnificent museum which that great and good man was building in a Western city. "Carry out your own idea," said Sterling. "You're the doctor. Only I'd advise you to let me invest the commission for you. You're not fit to handle money, Fred, my boy."

And yet, strangely enough, it was this very loss of his money that had been the making of him, as every one knew, including Mrs. Langham, who expressed the same idea in a more subtle way in her searching psychological story called "Redemption."

To be sure, Fred had originally planned to be a portrait painter. This worthy ambition was never to be carried out. But what of it? No one ever constructs his career according to plans and specifications. But now the Carroll children would at least have a chance to make the attempt.

"Well, it's not such a bad world after all," said Fred on the day of his election to a certain office in the Academy.

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"There are good people in it," said Molly. They were walking home together in the twilight—from a reception "to meet Mr. and Mrs. Frederic Carroll."

"It's a good world," repeated Fred in the kindly, authoritative manner of good husbands, and he seemed so convinced of it that he gave a half-dollar to a shabbily dressed fellow-man shivering at the corner. The latter, too, was an authoritative husband, but he had been out of work for three months owing to what Roger called "artificial over-production" in the steel industry, in order to create real earnings for honest stockholders like Fred who did not believe in buying on margins. It was too much like gambling.

"The fit always survive!" said Molly with a sigh as they turned away toward the cheering lights of home and those waiting to welcome them there. "True merit thrives upon adversity, as your Aunt Bella used to say."

"All the same, Molly, there's an occasional grain of truth in those old copy-book

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maxims," said her husband who was now successful. Being a man he took a less personal view of life, for he went on, "If I have won out, it seems to me more despite bad luck, than because of good luck. Aunt Bella's will, for example."

"Yes, dear," said Molly proudly, "you've won—all alone."

"That's where you're wrong," said her natural leader with his nicest look. "If it hadn't been for you and the kids—why, I'd have had no incentive to do my best! Don't you see?"

Doubtless Molly saw, but she only smiled oddly. "Genius always triumphs in the end," she said teasingly, and they turned in at their happy home.

"I don't know about that," Fred remarked opening the door. "But there is one thing I can honestly say," he added with the becoming modesty of a man of achievement, "what little I have accomplished in my life has been without bluffing any one—not even myself."

"I know, dear," said Molly. And such

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was her approval of him, it seems, that tears came to her soft eyes as, laughing, she looked up at him and passed through the open door, where they were met by the insistent rising generation—too young to understand this strange mingling of tears and laughter.

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